Washington, D.C. and the Idea of America: A reappraisal of the 1791 plan for the Nation's Capital

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April 2021
This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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Washington, D.C. was the first American planned city of its size and one of the first attempts at a spatial organisation of the nation's political objectives. This thesis argues that Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the city is a unique example of eighteenth-century speculative development, that assimilated dominant European garden and urban planning traditions, reflected a critical transition in attitudes towards nature and landscape, and produced an unprecedented symbolic framework for the balance of republican values and federal objectives. I use a review of the development of the plan and an analysis of its distribution of space to locate the city within a wider context of continental expansion and the consolidation of national union. In the first part of this thesis I trace three aspects of this context: first, the plan's relationship to contemporary patterns of land management, survey and territorial settlement; second, the eighteenth-century significance of nature within political thought and the manifestation of these ideas in the garden and landscape precedents available to the architect and his contemporaries; and third, the shift from representations of monarchy to celebrations of presidential authority, evident in L'Enfant's work. In the second part I conduct a drawn dissection of the structure of the 1791 plan and provide a new interpretation of the primary orientation of the city, the distribution of ceremonial spaces, and the projected character of the commercial and residential urban fabric. Through a conceptual-historical reconstruction of the relationship between the plan for the capital, national expansion and American democracy, my project seeks to recover the significance of Washington, D.C. as a seminal reflection of the collision of a European urban and landscape tradition with the formation of an American political ideology.

Preface and Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the many people who have aided me in undertaking this research and dissertation. First and foremost, my supervisor, Koen Steemers has provided invaluable support through the entire process. I would also like to thank Bob Tavernor, Nick Bullock and Max Sternberg, my advisors and associate supervisor, for their insightful advice and encouragement throughout and James Campbell for his exceedingly generous editorial input. I am particularly indebted to Peter Carl who first suggested I look at Washington back in the last century and has remained a constant reference point throughout.

I have been fortunate enough to benefit from the digital archive made available by the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Assembling the material for this dissertation during Covid-19 restrictions would have been impossible without this extraordinary resource.

I would also like to acknowledge the students and faculty of the Cambridge Faculty of Architecture and History of Art who have provided the support and discussion necessary to complete this project. Finally, none of this would have been possible without the patience of my family, Max Beckenbauer and Conrad Schroder Gowland.

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Introduction

There is little doubt that Washington, D.C. has a strong hold on the American imagination; it is both a powerful symbol and 'the Washington of postcards and movies and the evening news, the Washington that everyone comes to see' described as 'a proud face' that 'reflects many of our nation's greatest memories, achievements and aspirations.'[1] It is remarkable then, that Washington's place within American urbanism has not been better understood, and that its cultural representation has been so insubstantial, its monuments limited to serving as shorthand for the authority of government.

The objective of this thesis is to revisit the city's place in the history of urbanism, reviewing how its symbolic programme was constructed architecturally, the extent to which it was informed by contemporary political thought, and re-assessing the kind of urbanism that was inferred as a result. I will situate my analysis within an international context, and locate the development of Washington, D.C. within a broader history of the emergence the United States as a new and ever-expanding nation, and the concurrent shift towards unique forms of urban monumentality and the orchestration of commemorative events to shape national identity.[2] Most critically this places the plans for Washington, D.C. within the context of a continually evolving understanding of the role and character of a seat of republican government as it emerged in the late eighteenth century.[3]

[1] National Capital Planning Commission, "Extending the Legacy." p. 2, ii.
[2] Anderson, *Imagined Communities. On the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*; Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics*; Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*; Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*; Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity: Second Edition*; Breully, *Nationalism and the State*.
[3] Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*; Sonne, *Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century*.

Fig. 0.1

Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
1887, facsimile
United States Coast and Geodetic Survey
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. was conceived as a capital while the United States was still being constructed as a nation. Its role as the seat of the new government was set out in law, first under the Constitution itself, and then by the Residence Act of 1790, which determined its physical scope and location.[4] The Act delineated a ten-mile square district, the District of Columbia (D.C.), to be formed from land along the Potomac River valley that would be relinquished by the states of Maryland and Virginia. The district was anomalous within the new nation, an independent and congressionally unrepresented territory to house the President, Congress and the Judiciary. This arrangement was seen to be necessary, and the central location of the city along the eastern seaboard deemed essential to the preservation of the fragile post-revolutionary union. The Residence Act and the subsequent founding of the 'Federal City' represented an important compromise that balanced the centrality of constitutional government with the rights of individual states, whilst curbing the dominance of New York and Philadelphia (which had served as the focus for political activity during the Revolutionary period). This deliberate uprooting of the new nation's political centre is key to a larger understanding of the United States as a malleable construct, explicitly formed by a prominent set of individuals such as George Washington (1732-1799), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), James Madison (1751-1836), Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) and Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) among other 'founding fathers.' These men were building a nation through the application of law, the drafting of a constitution, and the explication of its terms to define an ideal political structure. The physical manifestation of this political structure was not yet apparent. It was President Washington's appointment of Pierre Charles L'Enfant (1754-1825) as the architect of the Federal City, and the late Enlightenment debate that informed his design, that enabled the plan for the city to become the locus for the representation of a nascent American government. This thesis examines the significance the location and plan of Washington, D.C., and explores the relationship between the initial design in 1791 and the political objectives of the American founding fathers (Fig. 0.1).

The role of the Federal City within a process of nation-building created a unique set of conditions by which a city plan might reflect an explicit set of political intentions. While other modern western capital cities, such as Rome, Paris, Vienna and Berlin, have been reconstructed over the course of their history, the new American city was the

[4] U.S. Laws & Statutes, *An Act to Establish the Seat of Government of the United States...September the 22d.*

first modern capital to be established as a complete urban idea with a comprehensive plan.[5] The discussions surrounding the ideological direction for the city intersect with the broader cultural debates of the period. This thesis argues that these debates, concurrent with the L'Enfant plan of 1791 were rooted in the late Enlightenment conception of American nationhood. It will be shown that the L'Enfant plan expressed assumptions about American cultural and political behaviour through the arrangement of public spaces, monuments and federal institutions, and their relationship to the surrounding landscape and geographic region.[6] It will be argued that this then positioned America within a very particular international context through the choice of precedents, from the network of avenues to the position of the individual buildings and the modulation of open space.

The thesis intersects with several areas of academic debate. My analysis of the development of the L'Enfant plan identifies its relation to the broader problems of political representation. More particularly, it builds on three areas of specialised literature: the architectural history of capital cities and urban settlements drawing on the tradition of Lewis Mumford and John Reps;[7] the history of the manipulation of landscape and readings of wilderness informed by the early work of Roderick Nash and Max Oelschlaeger[8] and the more recent contributions of Denis Cosgrove, William Cronon and Kenneth Olwig;[9] and republicanism in eighteenth-century political thought, a debate identified with the work of Joyce Appleby, Lance Banning, J.G.A.Pocock and Gordon Wood amongst others.[10] These are all well researched fields, but there is no

[5] Mumford and Downey, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*; Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States.*; Reps, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center*; Sonne, *Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century*.
[6] Lessoff, "Review Essay: The American Patrician City and Its Legacy"; Mumford and Downey, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*; Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States.*; Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic*.
[7] Mumford and Downey, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*; Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States.*; Sonne, *Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century*.
[8] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*; Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*.
[9] Cosgrove and Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*; Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness"; Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*; Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*; Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*; Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.
[10] Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government*, 1970; Adair, Appleby, and Yellin, *The Intellectual Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy: Republicanism, the Class Struggle, and the Virtuous Farmer*; Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*; Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited"; Kramnick, "The 'Great National Discussion': The Discourse of Politics in 1787"; Appleby, "The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology"; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the*

significant work that systematically tests the value of their findings in relation to Washington, D.C.. There has also been little substantial examination of the detail of L'Enfant's plan for Washington in the light of the political debates that informed it at the time,[11] or consideration of how this might shed light on how America constitutes its national image.

Literature Review

There have been a number of significant contributions to the wider history of the city that document the stages of Washington, D.C.'s founding, planning and development. John Reps' 1967 extension to the general survey of urban America, *Monumental Washington* is an important early contribution to the literature on the history of the city.[12] Fredrick Gutheim 1977 *Worth of a Nation,* and its 2006 revision with Antoinette Lee, provided one of the first comprehensive reviews of the history of the planning of the city to include a careful consideration of the Potomac site, as found, and the influence of the natural topography on the plan.[13] These and further comprehensive surveys such as Richard Longstreth's 2002 edited volume, *The Mall in Washington*[14] and Sue Kohler and Pamela Scott's 2006 *Designing the Nation's Capital*[15] have brought together the contributions of some of Washington's most active historians such as Therese O`Malley and Jon A. Peterson with an important catalogue of images and maps of the city - as do Iris Miller's *Washington in Maps*[16] and Ford C. Peatross' *Capital*

Atlantic Republican Tradition; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*; Elkins and McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*; Gould, "Virtue, Ideology, and the American Revolution: The Legacy of the Republican Synthesis"; Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography." See also: Dunn, *Political Obligation in Its Historical Context: Essays in Political Theory*; Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume 1, The Renaissance*; Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*.

[11] Bowling, "Dinner at Jefferson's"; Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*; Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.* Bowling has also made a significant contribution to analysis of the congressional record of the time. See: United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*; Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates."

[12] Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States.*; Reps, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center*.

[13] Gutheim and Lee, "Worthy of the Nation: Washington, DC, from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission."

[14] Longstreth, *Mall Washingt.* See also: Dougherty, "Baroque and Picturesque Motifs in L'Enfant's Design for the Federal Capital."

[15] Kohler, Scott, and (U.S.), *Des. Nation's Cap. 1901 Plan Washington, DC*.

[16] Miller, *Washington in Maps*.

Drawings.[17] However, as much of this work coincided with the centennial celebrations of the 1901 reconfiguration of the federal core by the McMillan Commission. The L'Enfant plan features only as largely introductory material, while Reiff's 1972 *Washington Architecture, 1791-1861*[18] focuses on the problems facing the city through the first half of the nineteenth century, not its foundations.

More politically orientated accounts of Washington, D.C. such as Wolfgang Sonne's review of capital cities *Representing the State*,[19] and his more recent paper on the city[20] also treat the 1791 plan as an abortive precursor to the current configuration of the capital. Recent accounts such as Tom Lewis' *A History of Our National City,*[21] Sarah Luria's literary analysis in her *Capital Speculations,*[22] and the more specifically oriented work of Robert Watson's *George Washington's Final Battle*[23] and Scott Berg's *Grand Avenues*[24] provide fresh and digestible histories of the nation's capital but are either too general in scope or narrative in style to provide significantly new insights into the 1791 plan. More focused work has explored the structures that have shaped Washington's racial and economic divisions - most notably Howard Gillette's detailed account of the planning process in Washington[25] and Asch, Myers and Musgrove's view of interracial tensions over four centuries.[26]

Closer studies of the early stages of the city's history are limited to the work of a handful of authors. Kenneth Bowling's extensive study of the early years of the republic has detailed the debates of the first congress and provided a forensic investigation of the events leading to the choice of location for the Federal City, and a detailed account of the primary figures and decisions that shaped the plan.[27] This work is supported by

[17] Peatross, *Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, D.C.*
[18] Reiff and of Fine Arts, *Washington Architecture, 1791-1861: Problems in Development*.
[19] Sonne, *Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century*.
[20] Sonne, "The Capital City as a Microcosm of the State: The Case of Washington."
[21] Lewis, *Washington: A History of Our National City*.
[22] Luria, *Capital Speculations: Writing and Building Washington, D.C.*
[23] Watson, *George Washington's Final Battle: The Epic Struggle to Build a Capital City and a Nation*.
[24] Berg, *Grand Avenues: The Story of Charles Pierre L'Enfant*.
[25] Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.*
[26] Asch and Musgrove, *Chocolate City*.
[27] United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*; Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates"; Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*; Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Bowling, "Dinner at Jefferson's"; Bowling, *Peter Charles L'Enfant: Vision, Honor and Male Friendship in the Early American Republic*.

Pamela Scott's account of the relocation of government[28] and C.M. Harris' description of the events from the appointment of L'Enfant to the design of the Capitol building.[29] These and Paul Caemmerer's biography of Pierre L'Enfant[30] serve as important sources for this thesis, however, they do not address the detail of the plan or its plausible precedents.

In-depth analysis of the L'Enfant plan is provided by a number of authors that fall into three categories. The first is composed of contributions from a handful of authors that wrote in response to the work of the McMillan Commission of 1901 (composed of architects Daniel Burnham and Charles Follen McKim, sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.). The Commission created a new plan for the federal Core which defined the scope and character of the Mall and its monuments and museums.[31] The process prompted a re-evaluation of L'Enfant's intentions by the coordinator of the Commission, Charles Moore and by architect Glenn Brown. Their approach was introduced in a speech to the Columbia Historical Society, January 6, 1902.[32] Brown offered the comparison to Wren and John Evelyn's plans for London, and Versailles that have dominated subsequent discourse on the city. Elbert Peets and William Partridge's contributions to this study were considerable and offered an important critique of the 1901 plan for the Washington, D.C.. Partridge was the consulting architect to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from 1928 when the McMillan plan was approved. His advocacy for the revised plan was reinforced by an extensive study of the archival documents related to the 1791 plan, published in 1930.[33] Partridge disputes the plan's association with London or Versailles and proceeds to conduct his own original examination of L'Enfant's drawing from its relationship to the topography, to the organisation of avenues, public spaces and the grid structure of streets. The merits and limitations of this work are reviewed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Elbert Peets (1886–1968) was a landscape architect and city planner who worked for the National Capital Planning Commission and served on the U.S.

[28] Scott, "Moving to the Seat of Government: 'Temporary Inconveniences and Privations.'"
[29] Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."
[30] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*. There are a number of shorter pieces that build on this work such as Morgan, "Maj. Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the Unhonored and Unrewarded Engineer"; Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View."
[31] U. S. Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, "Report of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia on the Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia."
[32] Brown, "The Making of a Plan for Washington City."Moore, "The Making of a Plan for the City of Washington."
[33] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."

Commission of Fine Arts. His early writings involved an historical survey of city plans, the organisation of public space and gardens in Europe and America published in 1922 in collaboration with Werner Hegemann as *The American Vitruvius*.[34] The final chapter is dedicated to the 1791 L'Enfant plan and is the first of several detailed studies undertaken by Peets.[35] His work was highly critical of the nineteenth and twentieth century evolution of the city. Most importantly, he used a series of sketches and plan comparisons to build visualisations of L'Enfant's intentions. While these are not always supported by evidence, they provide a plausible insight into the three-dimensional character of the original drawing. In the absence of an extensive archive of L'Enfant's drawings and writing, Peets' speculation is a valuable source for any re-evaluation of the work.

The second body of plan analysis provides a more current appraisal of the available manuscripts. Local architect and historical cartographer, Don Hawkins is the most prolific contributor to this field. His regular publications in *Washington History* on the 'unbuilt' aspects of the city provide an increasingly clear understanding of the L'Enfant plan.[36] His construction of the original topography of the Federal City site is a vital addition to further scholarship. This work is supported by a number of detailed studies of the disputed chronology of the plan, its most authoritative version being provided by Richard Stephenson;[37] versions of the engraving plan such as that of Frederick Goff and Coolie Verner; [38] and the history of specific sites provided by Thomas Bogar[39] and Mary Bugbee.[40] More recently Caren Yglesias has returned to the tradition of plan analysis to include a new study of the relationship of L'Enfant's public squares to water sources within her review of the history of the plan.[41] With regard to the examination of the original document, a 1979 paper by J L Sibley Jennings provides one of the very few forensic studies of the original manuscript, and this material is of vital significance to further research.[42]

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[34] Hegemann, Peets, and Collins, *The American Vitruvius: An Architects' Handbook of Urban Design*.
[35] Peets, "L'Enfant's Washington"; Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[36] Hawkins, "Unbuilt Washington: The View George Washington Rejected"; Hawkins, "L'Enfant's Capitol Lobby"; Hawkins, "Unbuilt Washington."
[37] Stephenson, *A Plan Whol[l]y New: Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington*.
[38] Goff, "Early Printing in Georgetown (Potomak), 1789-1800 and the Engraving of L'Enfant's Plan of Washington, 1792"; Verner, "Surveying and Mapping the New Federal City: The First Printed Maps of Washington, D.C."
[39] Bogar, "The Origins of Theatre in the District of Columbia, 1789-1800."
[40] Bugbee, "The Early Planning of Sites for Federal and Local Use in Washington, D. C."
[41] Yglesias, "To Build a Metaphor: L'Enfant's Design for the City of Washington."
[42] Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City."

Some of the relationships identified through the work of these authors has formed the basis for a substantial body of distinct literature, namely the interpretation of the L'Enfant plan as an example of a complex system of symbols associated with Freemasonry. This area is exemplified by R. Lomas' *Turning the Solomon Key*, N. R. Mann's *The Sacred Geometry of Washington, D.C,* D. Ovason's *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital,* a couple texts by C. Hodapp and J. Wasserman's *The Secrets of Masonic Washington.*[43] The aforementioned Don Hawkins has provided an extensive review and repudiation of much of this work.[44] While the influence of Freemasonry was significant at this time, and its history in the area has been carefully documented by R A Rutyna and P C Stewart in their *The History of Freemasonry in Virginia* and Steven Bullock's 'The Appeal of Post-Revolutionary Freemasonry,' there is little evidence of L'Enfant's prolonged involvement with the order. He was admitted to the Holland Lodge in New York in April of 1789, but he does not appear to have progressed past 'Entered Apprentice' stage.[45] It seems clear that the overlap between known surveying, garden and landscape planning techniques, and freemasonic iconography was more fortuitous than orchestrated.

Each area of this literature provides important insights into the chronology of events and their effect on the development of the plan. Many, particularly Bowling's detailed work on both congressional proceedings and the choice of location for government, bring the political debates between the nation's founders together with their physical impact. However, these examples of scholarship do not locate the L'Enfant plan within its contemporary architectural and urban context; consider concurrent European ideas regarding the significance of spatial organisation for the representation of social or political ideas; or orientate the plan within the existing patterns of eighteenth-century colonial territorial expansion, land surveys and property speculation that were shaping the continent. Neither do they relate L'Enfant's work to the abundant literature

[43] Lomas, *Turning the Solomon Key*; Hawkins, "Masonic Symbols in the L'Enfant Plan: An Examination of Recent Publications"; Ovason, *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation's Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.*; Hodapp, *Deciphering the Lost Symbol: Freemasons, Myths and the Mysteries of Washington, D.C.*; Wasserman, *The Secrets of Masonic Washington: A Guidebook to Signs, Symbols, and Ceremonies at the Origin of America's Capital*.
[44] Hawkins, "Masonic Symbols in the L'Enfant Plan: An Examination of Recent Publications."
[45] Rutyna and Stewart, *The History of Freemasonry in Virginia*; Bullock, "A Pure and Sublime System."There is an extensive archival review of L'Enfant's involvement with the freemasons provided by the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry: https://scottishrite.org/blog/about/media-publications/journal/article/the-masonic-career-of-major-pierre-charles-lenfant/

regarding garden and landscape design or consider how the choice of location and distribution of plots and public spaces in the plan reflect existing assumptions as to the nature of urban settlement.

Research questions

The objective of this thesis is to redress this balance of study and thereby, review the city's place in the history of urbanism and its relevance to wider debates regarding the development of nation states in the late eighteenth century. With the broader aim of assessing how early American politics made political space in an urban context, and the character of city that emerged as a result, I am orienting my research around the following questions:

1. Did the choice of location and subsequent plan for the Federal City imply a particular form of urban settlement?
2. How did the 1791 plan, and the structure of settlement that it suggested, reflect emerging strategies for land organisation, concurrent trends in garden design, and the shifting metaphorical role of nature?
3. What frameworks of political authority or forms of governance are reinforced by the primary organisation of the 1791 plan for the Federal City?
4. What patterns of ceremonial and everyday urban life, found in contemporary western European cities, are reflected in the 1791 plan for the Federal City?

My analysis of the L'Enfant plan centres on four aspects of its design: its conception as a complete urban settlement, the symbolic significance of the arrangements of buildings, the articulation of the civic and ceremonial life of the city, and its relationship to the existing natural topography and the geography of the wider region. The broader architectural and historical debates that inform my reading are related to these four areas. The first examines the expectations of the founding fathers in determining the location for a permanent seat of government in relation to the pattern of national expansion, settlement, and urban growth witnessed at the time. The second explores the intersection of concurrent land surveys, garden design, and a shifting depiction of wilderness and landscape, with the structure of the L'Enfant plan. The third engages with current and contemporary debates regarding the structure of eighteenth-century governance and the evolution of the symbolic role of central authority in the new republic from King to President. And the fourth examines the influence European ideas

of urban design, ceremonial life and representations of authority on the design of the city. This thesis employs these four strands of analysis to explain how the development of the plan for the city of Washington relates to a wider tradition of the 'Enlightenment project,' and was presented as an ideal representation of an ideal state.

Sources and methods:

These strands of analysis are informed by, and respond to, a distinct set of sources. The first consists of the primary written material such as the Congressional Record of 1789-91,[46] senatorial and diplomatic accounts, most importantly that of William Maclay[47] and the papers of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.[48] Each of these elucidate the sequence of decisions that led to the choice of site for the city and the direction of its further development. This material is supported by Bowling's detailed survey of proceedings of the first U.S. Congress and the documentation of the political compromise that led to the Residence and Funding (Assumption) Acts of 1790.[49] Evidence of the subsequent decisions that determined the drafting of L'Enfant's plan, and documentation of its reception are limited, as most L'Enfant's own papers and the critical portion of George Washington's diaries are absent from the archival record. This period is best covered by the correspondence between Pierre L'Enfant, Thomas Jefferson (then Secretary of State responsible for oversight of the plan), President Washington and the city commissioners, Daniel Carroll, Thomas Johnson and David Stuart. Two extensive reports from Pierre L'Enfant to George Washington from March and June 1791 are also critical to the interpretation of the plan. The two reports were published in the records of the Columbia Historical Society in 1899[50] and Elizabeth Kite

[46] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856."
[47] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates"; O'Dwyer, "A French Diplomat's View of Congress, 1790."
[48] Jefferson et al., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*; Jefferson, *Memoirs, Correspondence and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson*; Washington and Chase, *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary Series : March-June 1777*; Washington and Twohig, *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*.
[49] "United States Statutes at Large. 1st Congress, Second Session"; Bowling, "Dinner at Jefferson's"; United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*; Currie, "The Constitution in Congress: Substantive Issues in the First Congress, 1789-1791."'"The United States of America: Constitution." See also: Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; Sweig, "A Capital on the Potomac: A 1789 Broadside and Alexandria's Attempts to Capture the Cherished Prize"; Tindall, "Naming the Seat of Government of the United States: A Legislative Paradox."
[50] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."

compiled a comprehensive publication of this and the related correspondence in 1929.[51] All of this material has been digitised and made available online by the Library of Congress and the National Archive. Each source has made differing attempts to resolve L'Enfant's misspellings and unusual use of language. These variations and the architect's irregular use of punctuation contribute significantly to an ambiguity of interpretation already inherent in the limited and damaged drawn material. The analysis presented here uses the reports as published by the Columbia Historical Society in the first instance and draws on Kite's publication where further correspondence is informative. The National Archive record is used for the purpose of confirmation rather than as a primary resource as the digitisation is often too literal a translation of L'Enfant's writing to be comprehensible. Where ambiguities of interpretation are apparent these have been noted and further reference to the drawn material has been made.

The study of the congressional choice of the location for the Federal City is informed by an examination of contemporary map material – particularly Thomas Jefferys' maps of New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia which provide significant detail of trade routes, postal roads and river crossings.[52] These are read alongside the 1790 census data[53] and its 1940 mapping by National Archive cartographer Hermann Friis to identify patterns of inhabitation.[54]

My original map analysis makes use of the two extant plans as drawn by Pierre L'Enfant - the plan of the city as presented to George Washington in 1791 (Fig. 0.2) and the 'Dotted Line' plan that set out the principal avenues (Fig. 0.3) and two facsimile editions that were issued by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1887 (Figs. 0.1 & 0.4). Jennings' 1979 infrared and filtered photos of the L'Enfant original provide the last available layer of detail, as the manuscript is now too fragile to be made accessible.[55] It has also been necessary to refer to the Samuel Hill and Thackara & Vallance 1792 engravings of the plan (Figs. 0.5 & 0.6). These were arranged by

[51] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*.
[52] Jefferys, "A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of New England, Containing the Provinces of Massachusets Bay and New Hampshire, with the Colonies of Conecticut and Rhode Island, Divided into Counties and Townships: The Whole Composed from Actual Surveys and Its Situatio"; Fry et al., "A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia Containing the Whole Province of Maryland with Part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina."
[53] "Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States."
[54] Friis, "A Series of Population Maps of the Colonies and the United States, 1625-1790."
[55] Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City."

surveyor Andrew Ellicott to prepare the plan for the land sales necessary to fund the development of the city. L'Enfant is known to have rejected the changes initiated by Ellicott, but these engravings provide the detail absent from the faded L'Enfant drawing, and serve as a valuable source for the proposed uses of specific locations within the plan. These details are particularly relevant in cases where sites acquired specific functions such as that of the central market, early in the city's history. The full sequence of these versions is described in Chapter 4. In comparing the 1791 plan to details of eighteenth-century Paris, I have used hi-resolution scans of the Turgot (1739) (Fig. 0.7) and Jaillot (1775) (Fig. 0.8) plans.

The third significant body of sources relates to the nature of American national expansion, land settlement and the early growth of cities in the second half of the eighteenth century. This material is focused on the economic regionalisms of the eastern seaboard explored in the work of historians Julia Adams, Wayne Bodle, Simeon Crowther, R.J. Gough, James Kornwolf and J.S. Tiedemann;[56] the growth patterns of early Puritan communities detailed by John Grigg and Samuel Stabler;[57] and the social, political and economic characteristics of frontier expansion and the establishment of townships outlined in Thomas Humphreys work on land tenancy, Peter Mancall examination of trade patterns,[58] Sukkoo Kim and Robert Margo's overview of early American economic geography,[59] and M. Williams and Michael Witgen's analysis of life in the American backcountry.[60] The material provided by these authors establishes the context for a better understanding of the role and character of cities in the eighteenth century. American cities were relatively diminutive at this stage and the literature is similarly limited compared to the extensive body of work dedicated to later periods. Carl Bridenbaugh's review of urban life prior to American Independence is an essential early twentieth-century source and is informed by the more recent work of Sam Bass

[56] Adams, "Clear, Hold, Build: Patriarchy and Sovereignty in the Colonization of Early English America"; Bodle, "The Fabricated Region"; Bodle, "Themes and Directions in Middle Colonies Historiography, 1980-1994"; Crowther, "Urban Growth in the Mid-Atlantic States, 1785–1850"; Gough, "The Myth of the" Middle Colonies" an Analysis of Regionalization in Early America"; Tiedemann, "Interconnected Communities: The Middle Colonies on the Eve of the American Revolution"; Kornwolf, *Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial North America*.
[57] Grigg, "The Puritan Periphery"; Stabler, "Church, Space, and Pluralism."
[58] Mancall, Rosenbloom, and Weiss, "Commodity Exports, Invisible Exports and Terms of Trade for the Middle Colonies, 1720 to 1775"; Mancall, "The Moral Economy of the Eighteenth-Century Backcountry."
[59] Kim, Sukkoo, Margo, "Historical Perspectives on U.S. Economic Geography."
[60] Williams, *The Brittle Thread of Life: Backcountry People Make a Place for Themselves in Early America*; Witgen, "A Nation of Settlers: The Early American Republic and the Colonization of the Northwest Territory."

Warner Jr. as well as Howard Bodenhorn and David Cuberes' study of city growth from 1790 and Richard MacMaster's work on town formation.[61]

The eighteenth-century context for the creation of a new capital city is further supported by an extensive body of literature covering developments in American agriculture, frontier expansion, the geographic barriers to growth, and the infrastructure projects that were instigated to overcome them - J.T. Lemon and M.C. Sturges' readings of the social and literary character of agricultural life in the early republic being particularly informative.[62] The means by which trade routes might connect the new city to the continental interior are detailed in Corra Bacon-Fosters' early work on the clearing of the Potomac River[63] and the interregional (proto-federal) coordination that such endeavour required, is outlined by John Larson, Douglas Littlefield and Ronald Shaw.[64] Such material describes the extensive early projects that facilitated the consolidation of American nationhood. They identify the immediate post-independence period as a point of rapid transition from localised subsistence farming, small scale internal trade networks, and dispersed settlement, free from ' the tight reins of communal institutional life,'[65] towards vast collaborative endeavours.

These mechanics of expansion provide the necessary context for the development of a Federal City and the anticipation of its national role, but they are also framed by a wider political discussion regarding the relationship between the frontier and the nature of national union. Furthermore, the inherent contradictions and disagreement that characterised the early independence period and the shift of emphasis from the preservation of individual liberty to the structures of collective national prosperity, resonate through parallel areas of debate regarding the political and economic direction of the union as well as the practical and symbolic role of the expanding territory that it

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[61] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness - The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742*; Warner Jr, *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*; Bodenhorn and Cuberes, "Financial Development and City Growth: Evidence from Northeastern American Cities, 1790-1870"; MacMaster, "Philadelphia Merchants, Backcountry Shopkeepers, and Town-Making Fever." See also: Irvin, "The Streets of Philadelphia: Crowds, Congress, and the Political Culture of Revolution, 1774-1783"; Taylor, "American Urban Growth Preceding the Railway Age"; Bushman, "Family Security in the Transition From Farm To City, 1750-1850."
[62] Lemon, "Agriculture and Society in Early America"; Sturges, *Dwelling on the Land: The Literature of Agriculture in the Early American Republic*. See also: Wheelock, *Farming Along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, 1828-1971: A Study of Agricultural Sites in the C&O Canal National Historical Park*.
[63] Bacon-Foster, "Early Chapters in the Development of the Potomac Route to the West."
[64] Larson, "A Bridge, a Dam, a River: Liberty and Innovation in the Early Republic"; Littlefield, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream"; Shaw, "Canals in the Early Republic."
[65] Lemon, "Agriculture and Society in Early America," 93.

incorporated. According to Larson, the 'ambiguities in American republicanism, looked simultaneously forward and backward,'[66] aspiring to both the preservation of an open, unregulated continent, and the international prominence and innovative vigour of a unified nation. The examples of infrastructural improvements and the development of internal and international trade described in this literature, reflect the prolonged discourse on the political culture of the American Revolutionary period.

The debate over the origins of American republicanism has a particularly important bearing on whether we can read the plan for the Federal City as part of a wider ideological context. Robert E Shalthorpe's 1972 *Toward a Republican Synthesis*[67] laid out the chronology of the transition between a purely pragmatic interpretation of republicanism as a necessary and contingent form of post-Revolutionary government, and the mid-twentieth-century efforts to locate it within an ideological tradition of sixteenth-century English radicalism. This position was established in the 1960's by Bernard Bailyn[68] supported by the work of his PhD student Gordon S Wood[69] later that decade. The two authors and the many that followed[70] provided the theoretical context for the anti-federalist position and the structure of opposition to centralised authority. J.G.A. Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* then provided a historical framework that connected American revolutionary thought to the Florentine republic and the English Civil War. In each case, these protagonists of the 'republican synthesis' established a deep and international ideological background to the Jeffersonian republic, tied to ideas of civic humanism and the preservation of the limited governmental control in opposition to European despotism.

The most extensive rebuttal to this position came from Joyce Appleby from the early 1970's onward. Her work challenged the apparent anti-commercial emphasis of the republican synthesis and reclaimed the role of liberalism as critical to American Revolutionary politics. The opposing arguments are extensive and rooted in a close interpretation of a wide range of early modern authors and thinkers. The detail of such

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[66] Larson, "A Bridge, a Dam, a River: Liberty and Innovation in the Early Republic," 352.
[67] Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography."
[68] Bailyn and Garrett, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1765*.
[69] Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*.
[70] Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited"; Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government*, 1970; Kerber, "The Republican Ideology of the Revolutionary Generation"; McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*.

positions is less important than the extent to which they absorbed diverse and often contradictory readings of nature, land management, individual and collective virtue, and the suitable direction of national progress. Such areas of intellectual history reveal the simultaneity of seemingly incompatible ideologies and the inconsistent approaches to national identity that are echoed in the many contradictions evident the symbolic order of L'Enfant plan. Even more critically, the debate over the nature of American republicanism provides the necessary basis for considering the plurality of influences on the design of the Federal City.

The revisionist position of Lance Banning[71] makes this work particularly accessible and goes some way to reconciling competing interpretations. More recently, Adam J. Dahl's interpretation of continental growth as a form of internal imperialism navigates a mid-ground between the liberal and republican positions, and provides a strong new reading of the political implications of American expansion during the period in which L'Enfant created his plan.[72] This work and the detail included in the studies of specific inland settlements by Timothy Shannon, Alan Taylor, Keith Widder and Jessica Roney[73] place the pragmatics of both sanctioned, and squatter, settlements in the West within the context of late twentieth-century debates within political thought (Appleby, Pocock et al.) regarding the direction of American governance and the territorial impact of agrarian republicanism.[74]

An understanding of this material is necessary to chart the shifting discussions that set the priorities for the Federal City against the realities of eighteenth-century national and regional development. The parallel reading of the debates over the nature of the republic and the intentions of its founders, aims to expose the prevailing eighteenth-century expectations for the Federal City – the extent of its urban character, its potential role as

[71] Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited."
[72] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."
[73] Shannon, "The Ohio Company and the Meaning of Opportunity in the American West, 1786-1795"; Taylor, "Introduction: Expand or Die: The Revolution's New Empire"; Widder, "The 1767 Maps of Robert Rogers and Jonathan Carver: A Proposal for the Establishment of the Colony of Michilimackinac"; Roney, "1776, Viewed from the West."
[74] Adair, Appleby, and Yellin, *The Intellectual Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy: Republicanism, the Class Struggle, and the Virtuous Farmer*; Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*; Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited"; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*; Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government*, 1970; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*. See also Kramnick, "The 'Great National Discussion': The Discourse of Politics in 1787"; Elkins and McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*; McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*.

a centre of trade, and its relationship to both an immediate and distant hinterland - areas currently absent from the literature. This is understood within the context of strategies for the cultivation of the frontier, and the agricultural principles advocated by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in their correspondence.[75] This thesis explores attitudes towards the sources of national prosperity and the anticipated role of the new capital as a seat of centralised governance in a growing territory. I then attempt to relate the primary decisions over the choice of location for the Federal City to both the prevailing political ideology and evidence of political expediency.

The context of national growth and self-definition developed here, draws upon a body of work concerned with ideas of nationalism and revolution such as that of Hannah Arendt, Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, but relates this to the consolidation of authority through the use of land surveys.[76] The work concerning the origins and implementation of the Land Ordinance Acts of 1784, 1785 and 1787 provides a particularly important, and unacknowledged precedent for the Federal City project. Marcus Gallo is a significant contributor to this area and his documentation of the socio-political effects of western expansion helps to contextualise this late eighteenth-century territorial project that assimilated the Ohio Valley into the union.[77] This thesis attempts to relate the ambitions of the plans for the Federal City to a wider project of continental growth, the scale of the proposed capital reflecting both the intentions and the means of expansion.

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[75] There are numerous references to agricultural practice in general and in detail throughout the correspondence. Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, 29 December 1794." is an excellent example of the attention Jefferson paid to these matters as is (for Washington): Washington, "To Thomas Jefferson from George Washington, 6 July 1796."

[76] Arendt, *On Revolution*; Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding (1953-1975)*.Anderson, *Imagined Communities. On the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*; Gellner, *Culture, Identity, and Politics*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. See also: Breully, *Nationalism and the State*.

[77] Gallo, "Fair Play Has Entirely Ceased, and Law Has Taken Its Place": The Rise and Fall of the Squatter Republic in the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River, 1768–1800"; Gallo, "Improving Independence: The Struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794"; Gallo, "Imaginary Lines, Real Power: Surveyors and Land Speculation in the Mid-Atlantic Borderlands, 1681-1800"; See also: Ballard, *The Land Ordinance Act of 1784: Defining the Political Geography of a New Nation*; Cayton, "Artery and Border: The Ambiguous Development of the Ohio Valley in the Early Republic." Bergmann, "A 'Commercial View of This Unfortunate War': Economic Roots of an American National State in the Ohio Valley, 1775–1795"; Berkhofer, "Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System."Geib, "The Land Ordinance of 1785: A Bicentennial Review"; Gruenwald, "Space and Place on the Early American Frontier: The Ohio Valley as a Region, 1790–1850"; Henderson, "The Northwestern Lands of Pennsylvania, 1790-1812"; Hill, "Federalism, Republicanism, and the Northwest Ordinance"; Öhman, "Perfecting Independence: Tench Coxe and the Political Economy of Western Development."

The methods employed to survey, layout and sell large parts of the Northwest territory are an important example of the intersection of ideology, and political and economic need – a connection explored more broadly by James C Scott's *Seeing Like a State*.[78] An understanding of this context enables this thesis to relate the plan for the Federal City to both the pragmatics of national growth and its symbolic resonance with contemporary readings of cultivated and wild nature. This is informed by the primary texts on the character of the American interior, and plans for its 'taming,' held in Thomas Jefferson's library and assimilated into in his own *Notes on the State of Virginia.*[79] These include Batty Langley's *New Principles (1728)* and Philip Miller's *Gardener's Directory* as well as treatise on garden design such as Dezailler d'Argenville's *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (John James translation 1712),[80] Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770),[81] Joseph Heely on the Gardens of Hagley (1775),[82] William Chambers *view of Kew Gardens* (1763),[83] and Seeley's *Description of Stowe* (1769).[84] The material held by Jefferson suggests an important overlap between ideas of agricultural cultivation necessary for sustained national prosperity and the aesthetic principles of the eighteenth-century landscape. The secondary material related to both these areas is extensive. Accounts and analysis of the writings of Tocqueville and Crèvecouer are important sources[85] and relate the first-hand experience of the early American frontier to ideas of national progress associated with Turgot's theory of the stages of civilisation.[86] The ideas contained in these texts outline the apparent moral imperative to 'order' the continental landscape. This thesis uses such sources and their associated literature, such as Michael Faber and Stephen Mennell's

[78] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*. William Biggs, "Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation"; Crampton and Krygier, "An Introduction to Critical Cartography." are also an important contributions to this argument.
[79] Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*. See also Hallock, "Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West." Jefferson's interest in the frontier is its own area of study: Allen, "Acquiring 'Knowledge of Our Own Continent': Geopolitics, Science, and Jeffersonian Geography, 1783-1803"; Kimball, "Jefferson and the Arts"; Ronda, "'To Acquire What Knolege You Can': Thomas Jefferson as Exploration Patron and Planner."
[80] D'Argenville, Antoine Joseph Dezaillier; James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*.
[81] Whately, "Observations on Modern Gardening."
[82] Heely, *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil, and the Leasowes*.
[83] Chambers, *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew*.
[84] Seeley et al., *Stowe: A Description of the Magnificent House and Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Grenville Temple*.
[85] Crèvecouer, *Letters from and American Farmer*; Hales, "The Landscape of Tragedy: Crèvecoeur's 'Susquehanna'"; Atanassow, "Fortnight in the Wilderness: Tocqueville on Nature and Civilization"; Mason, "The Romance of the Inland Isle." See also: Harvey, "The Noble Savage and the Savage Noble: Philosophy and Ethnography in the Voyages of the Baron de Lahontan."
[86] Heffernan, "On Geography and Progress: Turgot's Plan d'un Ouvrage Sur La Géographie Politique (1751) and the Origins of Modern Progressive Thought."

work on the myth of the American frontier,[87] to attempt to relate the extensive layout of the L'Enfant plan to contemporary attitudes towards cultivation and settlement. This seeks to locate the 1791 plan in relation to the literature concerning the relationship between landscape and manifestations of governance such as Kenneth Olwig and Y F Tuan's *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic*[88] and Peter Cannavò and William Cronon's decades of work on nature, 'wilderness' and morality in the American context.[89]

Olwig's erudite argument for landscape as a source of political power and legitimacy provides an important basis for the strategic significance of the L'Enfant plan. His 'substantive' landscape, and the role of the rural polity in sixteenth century Britain provides a conceptual bridge between the legal and political objectives of land management and planning as described in the work of authors such as James Scott and David Harvey, and the areas of political thought explored by the proponents of the republican synthesis.[90] It is then Denis Cosgrove's extensive work on the evolution of the landscape idea as a cultural image from the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century that has made it possible to assess the symbolic significance of L'Enfant's work - both the structure of the plan and its impact as a form of representation.[91] Cosgrove has distinguished between the pictorial and the pragmatic, noting that 'in painting and garden design landscape achieved visually and ideologically what survey, mapmaking and ordnance charting achieved practically.[92] He also makes greater use of southern European sources than Olwig who tends to bypasses the social, political and aesthetic influence of eighteenth-century France.[93] A similar approach has been taken here to offer a mediated reading of the plan for the Federal City as both a vehicle of extensive

[87] Faber, "The American Frontier as State of Nature"; Mennell, "Liminality and the Frontier Myth in the Building of the American Empire."
[88] Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.
[89] Cannavò, "American Contradictions and Pastoral Visions"; Cannavò, "To the Thousandth Generation: Timelessness, Jeffersonian Republicanism and Environmentalism"; Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*; Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*; Cosgrove and Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*; Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*; Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea." See also: Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene." This material also relates to broader work on ideas of nature and wilderness such as Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*; Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*.
[90] Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.
[91] Cosgrove and Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*; Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*.
[92] Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea.," 46.
[93] This oversight is noted in Cosgrove's own review of Olwig's work: Cosgrove, "Reviewed Work(s): Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World by Kenneth Olwig."

organisation, control and commercial advantage, and legible manifestation of the symbolic structure of political authority in post-Revolutionary America.

William Cronon's analysis of historic and contemporary interpretations of 'wilderness,' and Cannovó's exploration of the pastoral provide a further vital context for the potential interpretation of the hinterland to L'Enfant's plan. James Machor extends this reading to the plan for the Federal City itself, suggesting that it was to be interspersed with green space similar to the plans for Philadelphia and Savannah, and anticipating Washington, D.C.'s twentieth century reconfiguration by the McMillan Commission.[94] While the plan analysis contained in the second part of this thesis discounts this interpretation, the importance of the pastoral to American urbanism is an important counterpoint to L'Enfant's layered capital city.

This thesis acknowledges the relevance of such debates to a much broader international context. Any study of eighteenth-century planning of this scale is dependent on an understanding of the complex evolution of attitudes towards the character of urban growth in Europe and parallel developments in garden design. John Dixon Hunt has been one of the most significant contributors to this area of study. Additional work by Theresa O'Malley and more recently, Emily Cooperman have formed important links between developments in Europe and their impact on American gardens and their representation.[95] This thesis suggests that such garden precedents, and contemporary ideas informing the growth of cities such as Paris and London, influenced Pierre L'Enfant, either directly through his access to city plans as is often suggested, or indirectly as a product of his upbringing in eighteenth-century France prior to 1777. The L'Enfant plan can be interpreted within this context. Chapter 5 of this thesis draws on Abbé Laugier's original writings and work by Robin Middleton and Dora Wiebenson,

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[94] Machor, *Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America*. Machor makes use of a little cited letter from L'Enfant to the Commissioners in 1800 where he refers to rural settlements within the plan. However this was written as part of a larger discussion of the city's growth and the support of a populations of labourers that would be building the city rather than a plan for a rural/urban distribution within the plan. Kahn and L'Enfant, "Appendix to Pierre L'Enfant's Letter to the Commissioners May 30, 1800."

[95] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*; Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*; Hunt and Willis, *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden, 1620-1820*; Hunt, *The English Landscape Garden: Examples of the Important Literature of the English Landscape Garden Movement Together with Some Earlier Garden Books*; Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory*; Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century*; Birch, *The Country Seats of the United States*; Fabiani Giannetto, *Foreign Trends Am. Gard.* Cooperman, "Belfield, Springland and Early American Picturesque: The Artist's Garden in the American Early Republic."O'Malley, "Appropriation and Adaptation: Early Gardening Literature in America."

to compare L'Enfant's plan to both the physical development of Paris in the eighteenth century and the culture that informed it.[96] Joseph Rykwert and Anthony Vidler's early publications on this period also provide an important theoretical framework for this comparison.[97]

This thesis demonstrates that growth of Paris and the development of its ceremonial spaces were important sources for L'Enfant's design. R.L. Cleary, Josef Konvitz and A. McClellan's analysis of the representation of the relationship between the individual and the state in the planning of eighteenth-century *places royales* provide important sources for this interpretation.[98] I show that similar spaces to those celebrating the monarchy and French festival culture are present in the detail of L'Enfant's work. This reading contributes to my attempt to argue for the centrality of the figure of the President in the organisation of the Federal City. This is supported by both a reading of David Waldstreicher's examination of early American fêtes and processions, as well as the histories of George Washington's' prominence in the eighteenth-century popular imagination, and his importance as a figure of virtue provided by D.W. Howe, Jason Lantzer, G. Wills and Gordon Wood.[99]

Plan analysis

In addition to the reading of these primary and secondary sources, this thesis draws heavily on my own new analysis of the available maps and plans of the city, to find focus within the expansive character of these areas of discourse and to tease apart the historic record. My drawn analysis reveals new correlations of spaces and systems of organisation and orientation, that have been previously overlooked. Furthermore, this clarifies the nature and chronology of the available source material, which although extensive, is polarised between Washington and Jefferson's reticence, and the

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[96] Laugier and Wale, *An Essay on Architecture; in Which Its True Principles Are Explained ... Adorned with a Frontispiece, Designed by Mr. Wale, Etc.*; Middleton, *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*; Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*.

[97] Rykwert, *The First Moderns:The Architects of the Eighteenth Century*; Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment*; Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime.*

[98] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Régime*.

[99] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*; Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*; Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership"; Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*; Wood, "The Greatness of George Washington."

Fig. 0.2

Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
1791
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Fig. 0.3

Dotted line map of Washington, D.C.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
1791
Map, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

occasionally explosive explicitness of their employees and opponents. These extremes have tended produce a scholarly overemphasis on the battles between personalities and the minutiae of their business rather than the direct spatial relationships and hierarchies revealed in the drawings and their annotation.[100] By returning to historic map material, concurrent demographic information, congressional debates, correspondence and the available plans and preparatory work for the design of the city, I argue that it is possible to understand how the city was understood as a form of settlement, to determine the layers of the setting out of primary thoroughfares and significant spaces, to deduce specific extant examples of spaces similar to L'Enfant's, and to compare the detail of the plan to available urban examples as well as garden designs and depictions of broader landscapes. This entails the careful tracing of the original drawing and its various adaptations and facsimiles (as archived by the Library of Congress and documented in Chapter 4) (Fig. 0.2) and a single remaining setting-out sketch (Fig 0.3). The forensic delamination of the plan's framework provides an invaluable primary method akin to the close reading of a text. The stages of this method and the relationships and patterns that it reveals are laid out systematically in each chapter and help to structure the thesis.

My dissection of the structures and detail of the L'Enfant plan reveals a careful layering of a broad symbolic armature, a studied ceremonial sequence of spaces, and a lived commercial city. To this extent, this thesis argues that Pierre L'Enfant's plan can be understood as a reflection of the political climate of the time, architecturally and allegorically. I argue that L'Enfant's mandate to bring together the order of authority with the practicalities of a lived settlement offers a similarly rich source of understanding of Late Enlightenment urban planning as it was manifest on the North American continent.

Structure

The thesis is structured in two parts. The first part, consisting of the first three chapters, analyses the context for the creation of plan, starting with the debate over the location for the permanent seat of government. The first chapter repositions the choice of the Potomac River valley in relation to contemporary concerns over future trade, land management, patterns of cultivation, and the character of existing townships. This

[100] Peterson, "The Mall, the McMillan Plan, and the Origins of American City Planning."

comparison is absent from the literature on Washington, D.C.. The second chapter relates these pragmatic conditions for new settlement to the wider context of American western expansion and locates the plan for the Federal City as part of an ambitious strategy of internal colonisation. I establish a relationship between the planning of the Federal City, the extensive land surveys and property speculation that typified the settlement of the American Frontier, and the characterisation of territory, landscape and wilderness that accompanied both. The L'Enfant plan has not been studied in this context before. The third chapter examines George Washington's role in the planning of the city and his relationship to his architect. I reveal the transferral of an iconography of monarchy to the republican setting of the Federal City and show how the President served as a potent symbol in the plan before the country had developed a coherent iconography.

The second part of this thesis consists of two chapters looking at the L'Enfant plan in more detail. Chapter four provides a chronology of the available drawings related to L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the Federal City. Using a close reading of the archived plan and its subsequent facsimiles, this section uncovers the geometric logics, points of convergence, and distribution of civic space apparent in the work. It examines the basis for the setting-out points for the city, their relationship to the district boundary and the existing topography. The material presented here is the result of extensive original drawing, tracing over numerous primary map resources to find points of comparison. The work reveals the rationale behind the orientation of avenues and configuration of openings within the proposed urban fabric. It suggests a primary, secondary and tertiary layering of the plan organisation, related to the ceremonial, civic and commercial orders of the city. The drawings are subject to acknowledged inconsistencies and distortions as they are based on damaged primary materials, however the key datum of the White House and Capitol locations are consistent and provide a means of reliable comparison. This drawn analysis provides the basis for comparison with contemporary precedents presented in the final chapter. The fifth chapter relates this detailed examination of the plan to specific built or planned precedents that would have been familiar to Pierre L'Enfant and to Thomas Jefferson at the time.

This thesis seeks to determine how L'Enfant translated the formal language of virtue and heroism, associated with European monarchical governance, into a plan for the capital of a republic. I show how L'Enfant created a new representational landscape that

looked backward towards European Baroque forms, while reaching forwards towards a proto-picturesque orientation towards the ‘untamed’ western frontier. In this respect, this thesis reinforces the role of the plan for Washington, D.C. as a key reflection of the ideas of nationhood, plans for expansion and the structure of government emerging in the first decade of the nation’s history.

Fig. 0.4

Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
1887, facsimile (with colour)
United States Coast and Geodetic Survey
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Fig. 0.5

Plan of the city of Washington

Andrew Ellicott, Samuel Hill (engraver)
1792 (facsimile 1888)
U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C

Fig. 0.6

Plan of the city of Washington

Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Thackara & Vallance (engraver)
The Universal Asylum, and Columbian magazine, Philadelphia, Mar. 1792.
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3850.ct004352

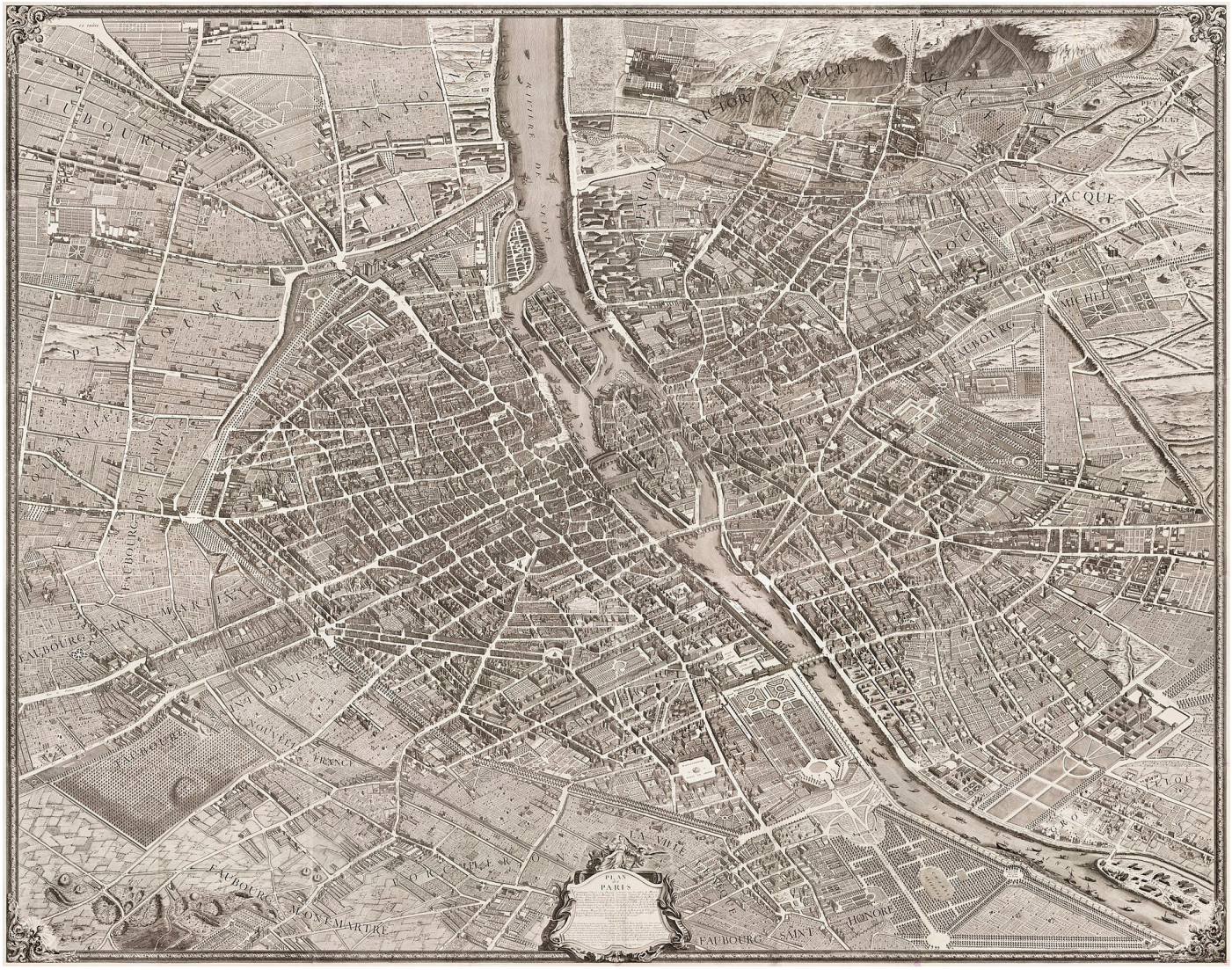


Fig. 0.7

Plan de Paris (Turgot)

Louis Bretez and Claude Lucas (engraver)
1734–1736
Norman B. Leventhal Map Center

Fig. 0.8

Map of Paris

Jaillot
1775
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:1775_Plan_de_Jaillot.jpg#filelinks

Part One

Locating Washington
Arranging Landscapes
L'Enfant's Washington

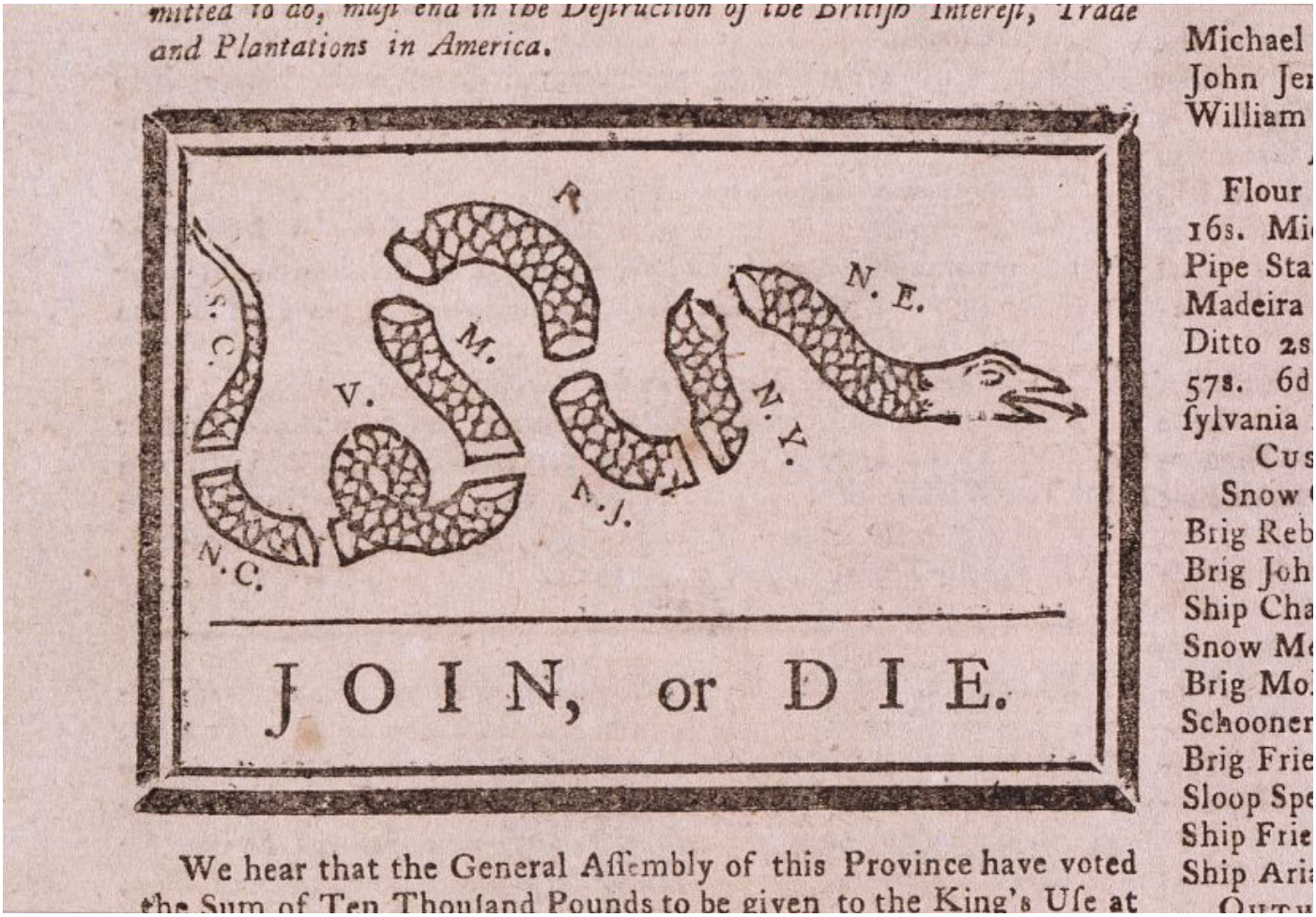


Fig. 1.1

Join or Die

Benjamin Franklin
9 May 1754
The Pennsylvania gazette
https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695523/

Chapter 1: Locating Washington

The site for the Federal City was defined by the Residence Act of 1790.[1] The decision was the result of a lengthy debate that was resolved through compromise - by which the war debts of the northern states would be absorbed by the federal government (Assumption Act) in exchange for a southern location for the capital. The establishment of a Federal District had been dictated by Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, and the Residence Act of 1790 then defined the scope and terms for a Permanent Seat of Government along the Potomac River. The need for a singular location for a centralised federal power had been the subject of disagreement for over a decade[2] and the terms defined by the Article are relatively minimal, the bulk of the text dealing more broadly with the powers of Congress. The designation of the District falls within the wider remit of the purchase and legislation of federal lands. Such pragmatic terms for establishing a capital city reflect the urgent need to consolidate a new and still fragile union. At this point in American history the idea of the Union was being formed in parallel to the character and legislative structures of statehood, and the principle of a seat of government detailed in this brief statement revolves more strongly around the limits of territories that might lie beyond the control of individual states than a characterisation of a national capital.

[1] U.S. Laws & Statutes, *An Act to Establish the Seat of Government of the United States...September the 22d.*
[2] United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*; Currie, "The Constitution in Congress: Substantive Issues in the First Congress, 1789-1791"; Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates."

The Basis for National Union

Pre-revolutionary union had been attempted and these efforts defined the parameters and purpose of central power prior to their constitutional form. The Albany Plan of 1754 is the earliest example of colonial union. The first and second Continental Congresses (1774-75) that followed, and the Articles of Confederation that documented their consensus represented the consolidation of efforts that enabled independence.[3] Benjamin Franklin's iconic 'unite or die' segmented snake that accompanied the Albany congress (Fig 1.1) distilled a powerful idea of union, however the Albany Plan was conceived as a military and diplomatic alliance in support of the British Empire at the outset of the French and Indian War (1754-1763).[4] The Union was formed to defend the western frontier against the French and secure the allegiance of Native American tribes that occupied the border territory between the Appalachians and the Ohio River.[5] Twenty years later the Continental Congresses assembled to form a united front against the British who had expanded the extent of their governance through taxation, while limiting territorial expansion through the Proclamation of 1763 (Fig.1.2).[6] The proclamation formed part of the Treaty of Paris which put an end to the Seven-Years War, a global conflict between European powers that impacted territorial claims and national boundaries on five continents.[7]

The Albany Plan ultimately failed and while its structure and objectives have been seen as a template for the Articles of Confederation as well as the U.S. Constitution, it revealed an incompatibility of intercolonial interests.[8] During the pre-revolutionary period, the thirteen colonies had little physical or political connection. Their trade and legislative alliances to Britain were often stronger than ties to one another.[9] Union was a

[3] Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress*.Adams and Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: Diary, with Passages from an Autobiography. Notes of Debates in the Continental Congress, in 1775 and 1776. Autobiography*.
[4] Yagi, *The Struggle for North America, 1754-1758: Britannia's Tarnished Laurels*.
[5] Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754*.
[6] Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress*. See also: Holton, "The Ohio Indians and the Coming of the American Revolution in Virginia."
[7] Du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence*.Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest*.
[8] "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress of 1754" (ed. and introduced by Beverly McAnear), MVHR vol 39. no. 4 (Mar. 1953) pp. 727-46; Babcock, Territoriality and the Historiography of Early North America, J. Amer. Studies, vol. 50, no. 3 (2016); Bailyn, "The Central Themes of the American Revolution: An Interpretation," in Essays on the American Revolution (eds. Stephen G. Kurtz & James H. Hutson 1973); Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Harvard 1967); Olson, "The British Government and Colonial Union, 1754."
[9] Tiedemann, "Interconnected Communities: The Middle Colonies on the Eve of the American Revolution."

necessity for, first the continued prosperity of colonists, and second their independence when the source of this prosperity was under threat. The remit of federal government was then focused on these immediate concerns. Article 1 Section 8 of the Constitution defined the powers of Congress, the majority of which related to issues of finance and defence. In other words, national government was put in place to enable, govern and defend the United States' own territorial claims and commercial interests. Having been at the heart of a global theatre of war, subjected to punitive taxation in its aftermath, and having struggled with debt and disturbance for decades, the seat of this new national government was to act as the legislative expression of a new national power and a self-defined source of stability at the heart of a global trade network that marked a critical break with existing patterns of sovereignty.

The plan for a national capital, thus reflects an unusual collision of expansive political debate and focused pragmatic urgency. Hannah Arendt suggested that the formation of post-revolutionary America may in fact have been a function of the rapid structuring of political institutions - 'the machinery of government'[10]- more than it was a consolidation of a developed political theory.[11] The 'Permanent Seat of Government' was then planned at speed to fortify such a new institutional order, and more prosaically, to facilitate rapid land sales and extensive settlement. The creation of a new city of this scale reflected the early post-revolutionary need for the social and political concepts underpinning new nationhood and ensuring its enduring prosperity, to be concretised legally through structures like the Constitution; spatially through the promise of physical expansion supported by the Land Ordinance Acts; and ideologically through the ambitions and order suggested by the Jeffersonian agrarian republic. This thesis argues that the plan for the Federal City locates these colliding objectives in a city largely without precedent, planned to reflect America's status as a beacon of liberty for eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe, and the culmination of decades of debate over the balance of power. The new city then provided a physical focal point and an important receptacle for the spatial, symbolic, commercial and ceremonial expression of the priorities of the new nation.

[10] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 241.
[11] Smith, "On Revolution: Arendt, Locke and Republican Revisionism," 561.

The plan for the Federal City was significant given the breadth of structure and ideology it was required to embody. The remit of Pierre L'Enfant's commission was unusually unclear by comparison, and the legislation and related correspondence give little indication of what form the settlement might take.[12] The establishment of a federal territory was understood to be instrumental in securing the stability of the new union, and its generous expanse was to provide sufficient saleable land to support the construction of federal buildings.[13] These criteria are far more clearly defined in the available documentation and historical record than any attempt to consolidate a coherent urban plan for a lived city. L'Enfant's brief was highly ambiguous, and the objectives of the key protagonists, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, were exceedingly vague. The letters between the two touch upon the plan for the city infrequently and obliquely, and their instructions to L'Enfant are either very general or highly specific and pragmatic. For such a vast endeavour, very little direction was provided.

The first congressional record and supporting personal accounts provide some insight. There is evidence of a more heated political discussion that placed the plan for Federal City, and the choice of its location, within the context of concurrent frontier development and a larger debate over the appropriate direction and political organisation of national expansion. In the absence of a clearer directive, the often-explosive opinions of congressmen give some indication of the shared assumptions about the potential character of the capital. Establishing this context is essential to determining the level of intention behind L'Enfant's plan. Without this close reading it is impossible to understand the city's role in the origins of American planning. By combining an analysis of early American political discourse, advances in land surveys, and the complex eighteenth-century debates over the perils of urbanisation and the political importance of the rural heartland, I identify new connections between L'Enfant's highly unusual plan for the nation's capital, the development of the Potomac site, and contemporary trade and land management strategies.

My analysis of the choice of location is informed by the correspondence between key stakeholders which reveal their motivations and commercial interests. This chapter

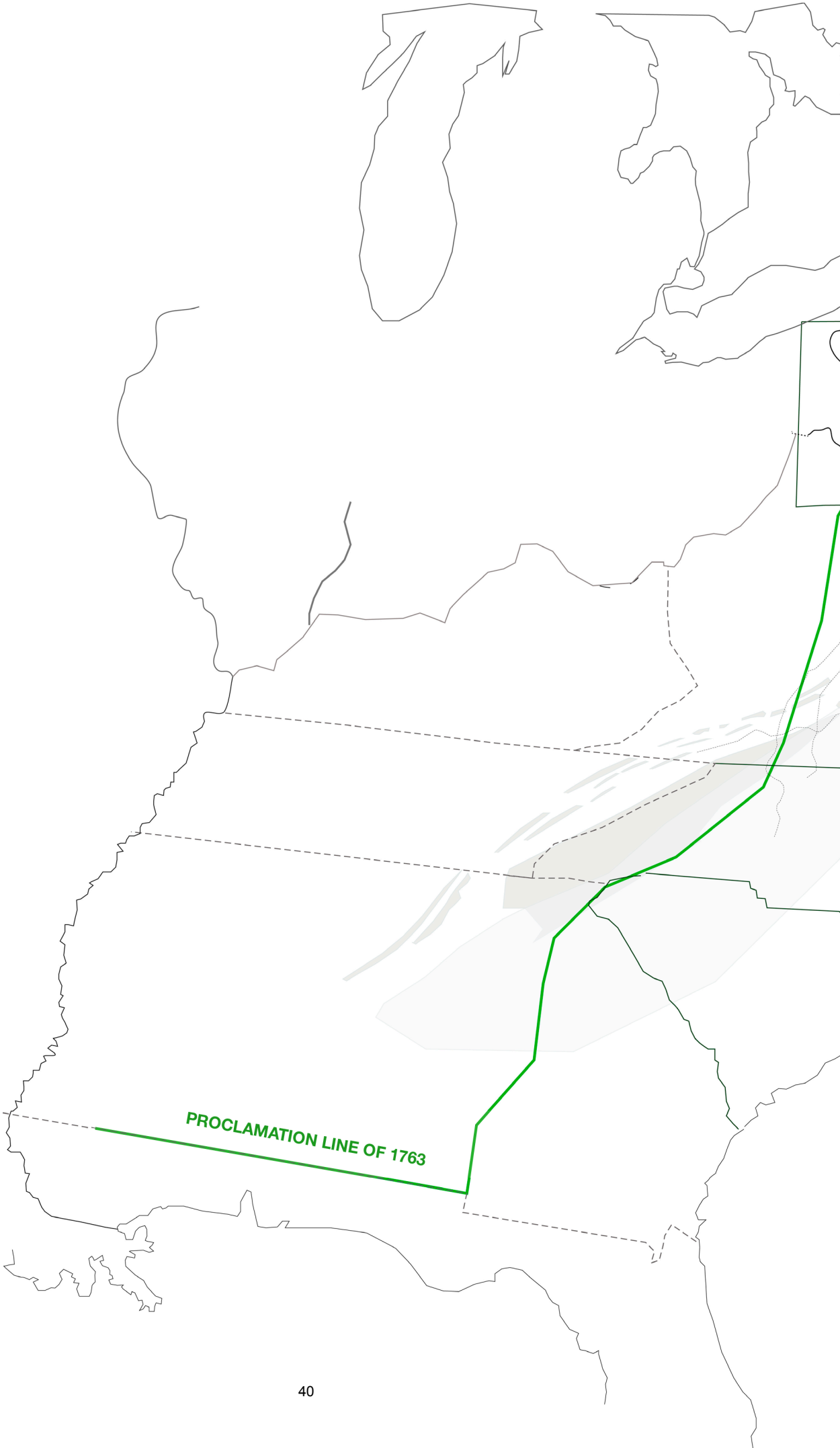
[12] Washington, "Proclamation of Federal District with Map." Provides the most complete instruction for the direction of the plan.
[13] Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*.

maps these relative interests against the many alternative locations proposed by Congress for the site of the Federal City and their correlation with navigable river and transport links, patterns of land use and occupation. The patterns that these new drawings reveal challenge the idea that the location for the Federal City was determined as the result of a purely political compromise[14] and makes new connections between the decision over the location of the Federal City and a more complex array of factors – such as the wider debates surrounding the political significance of inland colonisation and the structure of the expanding nation.

When framed in this way the choice of location for the Federal City can be seen as instrumental to the structure of national growth. Furthermore, the creation of this new capital, and an entirely new settlement, in a relative backwater reflects the inherent tensions between urban and rural manifestations of the republic. It is also closely related to an evolving understanding of the moral value of nature and wilderness,[15] a growing mythology associated with the frontier and western expansion,[16] and an increasingly complex understanding of the metaphorical value of structured landscape as part of a wholly new, American, ceremonial order.[17]

In the first instance these difficulties were exercised in the early debates over the location of the district, debates that were resolved by reluctant compromise rather than by active consensus. These centred on the fair distribution of authority in the new and still fragile union however, the more detailed discussions evidenced by the Annals of the First Congress, also reveal complex considerations and diverse speculation as to the shape and extent of the growing nation (detailed later in this chapter). This thesis argues that such priorities were reflected in the 1791 plan on several levels, in so far as it reflected and amplified the conditions of the site as found - the choice of this site in turn, I suggest, revealing essential political and philosophical positions about landscape, frontier, agricultural settlement and commerce. It has been shown by historians such as

[14] United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*; Bowling, "Dinner at Jefferson's."
[15] Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.
[16] Faber, "The American Frontier as State of Nature"; Mennell, "Liminality and the Frontier Myth in the Building of the American Empire"; Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner."
[17] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*.


PROCLAMATION LINE OF 1763

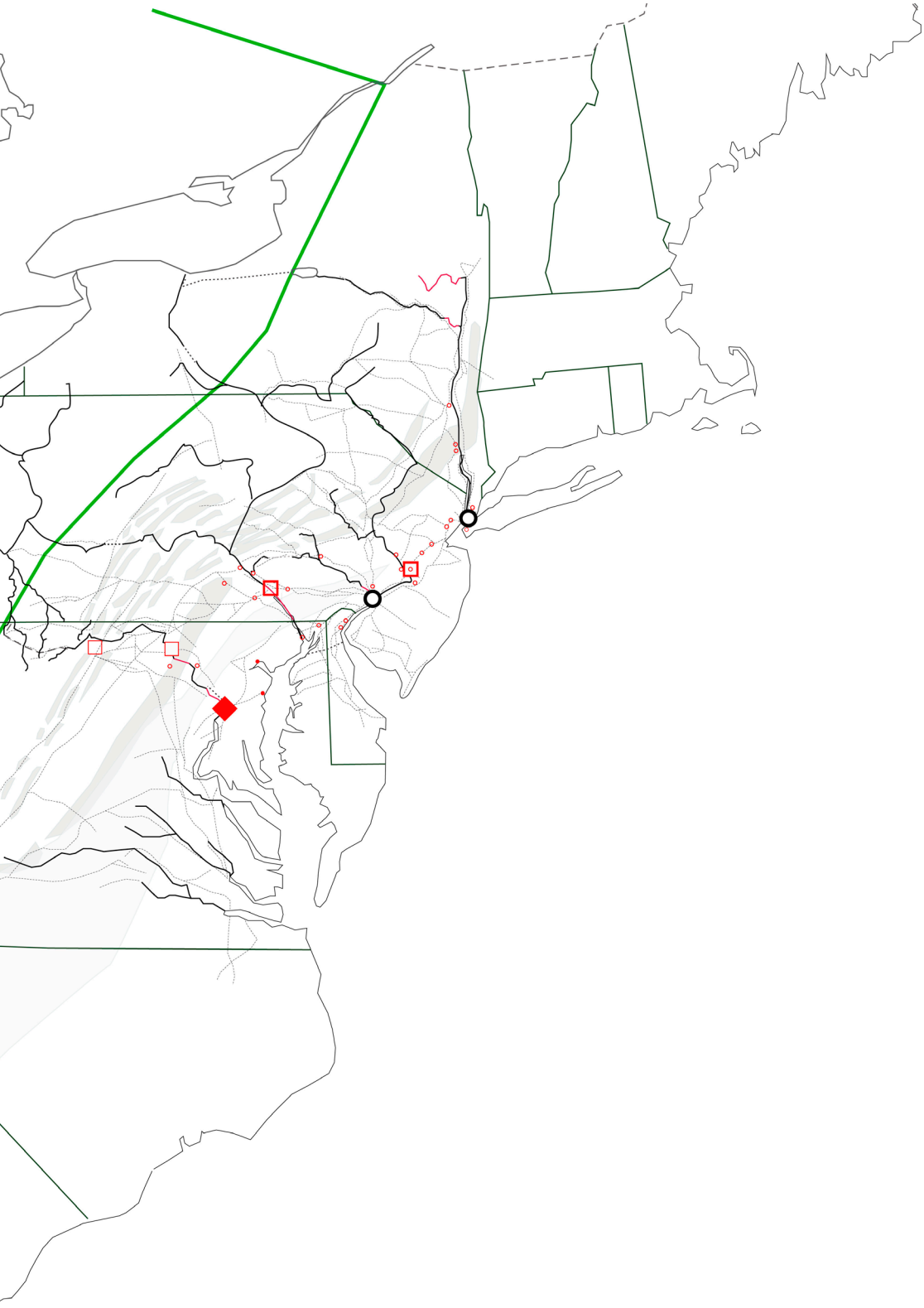


Fig. 1.2

The Proclamation Line in relation to locations for the Federal City

The line created a buffer zone along geographic barrier of the Appalachian range. There is a clear advantage given to the North where the settlements that straddled the mountains were contained and accommodated. The locations under consideration are contained within this boundary but are orientated towards Westward expansion via established river routes.

(Author)

Bowling and Gutheim[18] that the plan for Washington, D.C. reflected the priorities of its commissioners and overseers, beginning with George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, but this thesis attempts to reveal the plan's importance with regards to a much more extensive historical context that determined early American expectations as to the growth of cities, the role of public space, and the practical and symbolic role of landscape.

Anti-urbanism and the Choice of Location

The relationship of the Federal City to the surrounding landscape was predicated on its location. Prior to the appointment of Pierre L'Enfant and the development of the plan, much of the congressional debate from September 1789,[19] centred on the potential site for the city and the need for a singular, permanent seat of federal government. The comparative locational advantage afforded to any one region created significant conflict and reflected wider divisions inherent to the confederation of states. Nationalist interests including those of representatives from Virginia and Maryland such as James Madison and Daniel Carroll (later one of the three commissioners for the Federal City) favoured an increase in power of a centralised government supported by the potential growth of existing commercial centres such as Philadelphia.[20] This in turn split the wider nationalist faction in Congress geographically, as it denied southern states the opportunity of founding a new commercial centre of their own. Counter to this position, an alternative voting block of what Lawrence Cress terms the 'parochial coalition'[21] rallied against the dominance and potentially destructive influence of the city of Philadelphia on the processes and good character of government. Writing to John Adams in December if 1783, Samuel Osgood notes that:

> '…it would not have been possible, that Congress should ever have been a free & independent Body in the City of P——a.— Plans for absolute Government, for deceiving the lower Classes of People, for introducing undue Influence, for any Kind

[18] Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Gutheim and Lee, "Worthy of the Nation: Washington, DC, from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission."
[19] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856."
[20] Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:245.
[21] This 'parochialist coalition included Elbridge Gerry, Stephen Higginson, and Samuel Osgood of Massachusetts, David Howell and William Ellery of Rhode Island, Arthur Lee and Theodorick Bland of Virginia, and Ralph Izard and John Gervais of South Carolina.' Cress, "Whither Columbia?," 584.

> of Government, in which Democracy has the least possible Share, originate, are cherished & disseminated from thence.'[22]

The perception of both a tactical threat to the Union precipitated by congressional disunity, and a moral threat to the integrity of core republican principles generated a strong opposition to maintaining the seat of government in Philadelphia.[23]

The siting of the Federal City on the banks of the Potomac was relatively unorthodox and the weight of congressional opinion was not initially balanced in its favour.[24] The decision was politically contingent and the result of considerable compromise and lengthy vacillation,[25] but the proposal also reflects the Founders' understanding of the nature of settlement and expansion that might appropriately represent the priorities of the new nation. The anti-Philadelphia coalition objected to the city, and the manoeuvrings of then assistant U.S. Superintendent of Finance, Gouverneur Morris, but their position was related to a larger anti-urban sentiment that underpinned the choice of location for the Federal City.[26] The negative perception of centres such as Philadelphia was justified in part - the business of government was intertwined with its physical environment. The city was home to members of Congress, and the source of their wider understanding of the demands of a local population, the progress of the Revolution and its aftermath, as well as providing the more prosaic facilities that supported congressional life. Benjamin Irvin's study of crowds in the city during this period provides a vivid impression of the 'interplay between the delegates who gathered in the State House and the people who gathered in Philadelphia's streets,'[27] and the importance of such direct exposure to the extremes of public opinion. The impending conflict generated a growing anxiety about civil unrest, and the threat of violence held the potential for undue political influence. Fears of local mob behaviour became justified in June of 1783 when furloughed soldiers marched on the State Building to demand

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[22] Osgood, "To John Adams from Samuel Osgood, 7 December 1783."
[23] See the congressional debates : Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:146–49, 154.
[24] Benton, 1:150–51, 155.
[25] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856"; Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates"; United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*.
[26] Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; Currie, "The Constitution in Congress: Substantive Issues in the First Congress, 1789-1791."
[27] Irvin, "The Streets of Philadelphia: Crowds, Congress, and the Political Culture of Revolution, 1774-1783." P 11.

backpay.[28] While the soldiers' grievances did not present a significant danger, their presence was enough to reinforce an impression of urban volatility, radicalism and popular disorder.[29]

Such pragmatic concerns supported the removal of government from an established city. Beyond the threat violence, the diversity and mobility of the urban population and the concentration of street festivity was seen by many in Congress as an obstacle to virtue.[30] Furthermore, the commercial activity in centres such as Philadelphia and New York generated such a social mix and level of perceived moral ambiguity, that the dangers of urban behaviour were conflated with the financial structures that enabled them. This brought the debates over the economic direction of the Union together with arguments over the relative morality of urban and rural settings.[31] A unified financial sector was associated with a federalist political position, and urban centres became associated with an economic system based on speculation, rather than trade derived from agricultural production.[32]

It is then apt that most of the historical analysis of the divisions and debates of this first Congress has centred on the relative interdependency of the future of national finance and the location of government.[33] The Compromise of 1790 which enabled the Residence Act to be adopted and made law, did so in exchange for the federal assumption of states' war debts (the Assumption Act of 1790). The balance between the southern states' interest in the location of government and the northern states' financial concerns may have been the result of a fortuitous negotiation between Hamilton, Jefferson and Madison, but the intricacies of the debates that consolidated this position in Congress equated the management of debt, the centralisation of a banking system and

[28] Such insurgent behaviour was reminiscent of Shays Rebellion which had acted as a catalyst for the formation of a national constitution to respond to upheaval of this kind. Distress at a failure to be paid for military service was at the heart of many popular uprisings in the early post-revolutionary period.
[29] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:247.
[30] The extent of festival culture in eighteenth century America is related in detail by: Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. and the events in Philadelphia described in detail by: Irvin, "The Streets of Philadelphia: Crowds, Congress, and the Political Culture of Revolution, 1774-1783."
[31] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness - The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742*; Crowther, "Urban Growth in the Mid-Atlantic States, 1785–1850."
[32] Elkins and McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*.
[33] Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*; Bowling, "Dinner at Jefferson's"; Cooke, "The Compromise of 1790"; O'Dwyer, "A French Diplomat's View of Congress, 1790."

speculative investment, with urban life.[34] Thus, the argument over the location of the Federal City was entwined with conflicting readings of what constituted a viable source for national prosperity, and the commercial structures that might maintain it.

The congressional debates leading up to the passing of the Residence Act echoed nationalist (federal), and republican principles, but they were by no means binary.[35] Republicans may have favoured a system of commerce based upon advances in agriculture, and raised suspicions as to the moral efficacy of a financial system built upon centralised investment, but they were not inherently opposed to commerce.[36] They saw the future of the Union as tied to western expansion and the seemingly infinite potential of turning what was then regarded as a 'wilderness' into cultivated land, under the watchful eye of the yeoman farmer.[37] This was different from but not incompatible with federalists support for international trade and speculation. These distinctions are at the heart of the extensive discourse on the Jeffersonian republic.

The literature has been dominated by Wood, Bailyn and Pocock who located republicanism within the complex ideological and historical framework of civic humanism.[38] Joyce Appleby, their most prolific opponent has championed the role of commercial enterprise within the American agrarian ideal, and regarded the outlet for produce within a market economy as being the key to the autonomy of the individual.[39] These arguments and the density of work that they have generated, reflect the plurality of the views held in the post-revolutionary era, and both positions are relevant to our interpretation of the plan for the Federal City. In one respect, the relationship of the city to an expanding productive frontier was critical to national success. But in another, it was necessary for virtuous government to be identified with the uncontaminated natural landscape rather than a morally compromised commercial centre. These differing positions reinforce the polarisation of Federalist and Republican interests, but I argue

[34] Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; Crowther, "Urban Growth in the Mid-Atlantic States, 1785–1850."
[35] Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography."
[36] Öhman, "Perfecting Independence: Tench Coxe and the Political Economy of Western Development."
[37] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."
[38] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*; Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*; Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*.
[39] Appleby, "What Is Still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?"; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*.Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

that an antipathy towards urban life and the pre-Romantic framing of nature was more pervasive and embedded in the articulation of national objectives and this level of distrust was evident in the debate over the location of government.[40]

The Debate over Location

There is a significant body of work associated with the debate over the location of the Federal City as it was played out in the first Congress, most notably that of Kenneth Bowling. Bowling has produced an extensive study of the negotiations over the location for the Federal City and a comprehensive assembly of supporting primary sources otherwise missing from the congressional record.[41] His historical review reveals a clouded and highly conspiratorial process, seemingly designed to deny the interests of competing states and preserve local trade advantages. While other accounts of the congressional proceedings[42] have focused on the nature of the compromise that traded the federal assumption of outstanding state war debt as advocated by Alexander Hamilton, for acquiescence to the lobby for a southern capital, Bowling's review of the period, the evidence in the congressional record, and the diary accounts of William Maclay (U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania)[43] suggest resistance to both the privileging of an existing city, and the establishment of a new commercial competitor.

Through the early stages of debate in the House, from the summer of 1789, the location on the Potomac appeared to be a remote possibility or 'vain whim'- its advantage eventually secured by George Washington's own influence, which according to Maclay's Senate diary (16 July 1790), made him 'in the hands of Hamilton, the

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[40] Appleby, "What Is Still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?"; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

[41] Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Gutheim and Lee, "Worthy of the Nation: Washington, DC, from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission"; Bowling, "Dinner at Jefferson's"; Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*. In addition to this work several others have contributed to the field in order to shed light on the nature of the compromise and the abiding concerns of those involved. See Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; O'Dwyer, "A French Diplomat's View of Congress, 1790." amongst others.

[42] See Cooke, "The Compromise of 1790." The analysis of the text of the Federalist has dominated this discussion as it is a formative moment in the battle between Republican and Federalist interests. The expectations of the basis for a national economy have been the primary focus for most historians of the period.

[43] The material gathered here is based primarily on Volumes 1 and 2 of the Annals of Congress; Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856." and Trent and Maclay, *Journal of William Maclay, United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789- 1791.*Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates." DePauw, *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Legislative Histories*.

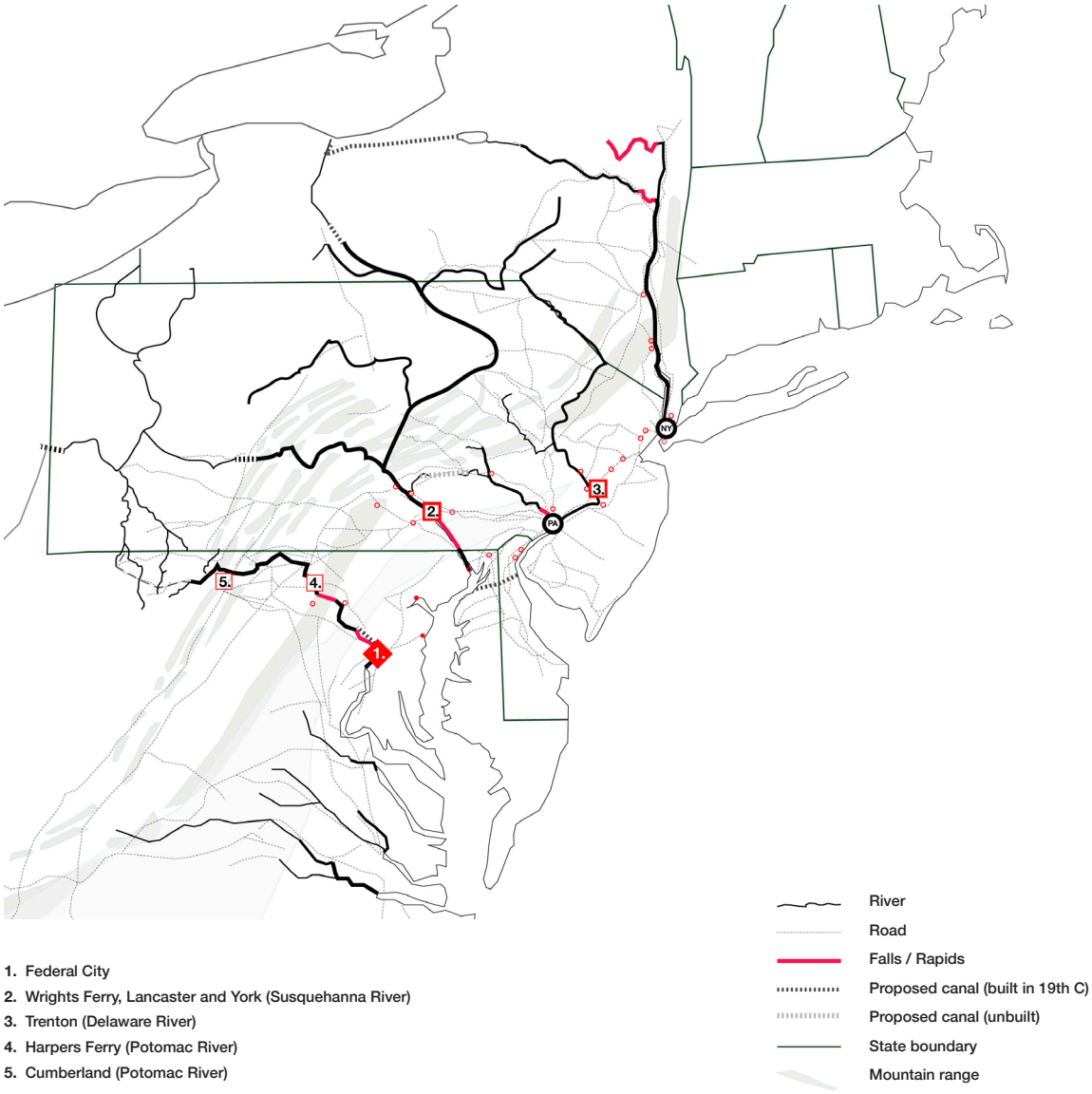

Fig. 1.3

Distribution of proposed sites for the Seat of Government
in relation to river and land routes

The proposed locations for the Federal City cluster along the primary rivers that were intended to be developed to accommodate trade with the continental interior. Most coincided with established road networks and intended canal projects. At the time of the debates in congress these routes were limited to overland portage of boats and goods.

(Author)

dishclout [sic] of every dirty speculation, as his name goes to wipe away blame and silence all murmuring.'[44] The majority of early allegiances within the first Congress concentrated on sites along the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. These acted as a proxy for the wider factions of Philadelphian, New Yorker and New England interests, the southern states being largely absent from these sessions and North Carolina delegates only joining congress in January 1790. These factions not only represented the geographic divisions of the Union but cross-factional alignment with the federal-republican economic and political policy divisions that characterised the period.

The Congressional Record and the diary of William Maclay provide evidence of the shift in tenor of the debate from the Autumn of 1789 through to the final vote on the Residence Act in July 1790.[45] In sum, Congress discussed a total of sixteen possible sites during their deliberations, and a further seven were suggested outside formal sessions (Fig.1.3).[46] Bowling has documented the debate surrounding the merits of each of these. His work identifies the negotiation between the eastern and southern states to secure their relative influence (or deny one another's) over the federal government, and the advantages that a proximate location might afford.[47] Initial deliberations centered on the location of the temporary home for government while a more permanent seat was being prepared.[48] This involved a complex battle to retain Congress in either Philadelphia or New York for the ten years prior to its permanent relocation. It was even suggested that during the decade-long interim stage that enthusiasm for a fresh location might dwindle, and the temporary location become permanent by default. Writing in 1789, French diplomat Louis-Guillaume Otto suggested that, were George Washington 'still in office in 1800, it would be very difficult to make Congress leave the richest and most populated city of the continent to repair to a village.'[49] The remote locations that opposing factions then argued for, were proposed as a measure to mitigate the advantage gained by housing Congress during its formative decade and secure its eventual removal.[50] In the early stages of these debates, a decision in favour of either

[44] Trent and Maclay, *Journal of William Maclay, United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789- 1791.* p.329
[45] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates"; Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856."
[46] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856."
[47]Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*.
[48] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:242–47.
[49] O'Dwyer, "A French Diplomat's View of Congress, 1790," 441.
[50] Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*

New York or Philadelphia required a viable mid-region site for the permanent residence that might balance the relative advantages within the Union.[51]

The basis for such a decision resided in the balance of political and commercial interests across the confederation, interests that were informed by complex historical divisions. It is customarily understood that regional affiliation divided the Union into northern, southern and middle states, each with shared priorities and patterns of land management and trade. However, Robert J. Gough has identified further subdivisions that orientated factions within the middle colonies towards adjacent regional interests. These were aligned to geographic characteristics, 'rivers and coastal waterways [helping] to divide the section into two regions oriented in opposite directions.'[52] Such physiographic delineations are essential to an understanding of the context for the siting of the Federal City on the banks of the Potomac, and the extent to which this may have been regarded as a basis for national cohesion. While it has been argued that the eighteenth-century colonies were better connected to Britain than to one another, authors such as Gough and Joseph Tiedemann have gathered evidence for the gradual development of trade, familial and cultural links that created a complex overlapping of regions and supported both commercial and political alliances through the latter half of the century.[53]

In the earlier part of the seventeen-hundreds, there is also evidence of the growth of self-sufficient communities in the continental interior and the development of internal trade networks that accompanied dominant seaborn commerce to Europe and the Caribbean.[54] However the connection between these Atlantic exports, through the major commercial ports and domestic trade, remained limited.[55] Both relied upon the navigable rivers that linked urban centers and seaports to their hinterlands alongside the development of postal roads connecting regions north-to-south (Fig.1.3). These limited transport connections were not yet supported by the network of canals that would prefigure the nineteenth-century continental railway system.[56] Through the Colonial and

[51] United States Congress et al., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791: Petition Histories and Non-Legislative Official Documents*.
[52] Gough, "The Myth of the" Middle Colonies" an Analysis of Regionalization in Early America," 405.
[53] Gough, "The Myth of the" Middle Colonies" an Analysis of Regionalization in Early America"; Tiedemann, "Interconnected Communities: The Middle Colonies on the Eve of the American Revolution."
[54] Bodle, "Themes and Directions in Middle Colonies Historiography, 1980-1994"; Bodle, "The Fabricated Region."
[55] Tiedemann, "Interconnected Communities: The Middle Colonies on the Eve of the American Revolution."
[56] Goodrich and 1897-1971, "Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, 1800-1890."

early Independence periods, the connections between commercial centres and their hinterlands depended upon river trade and a complex system of portages that could traverse unnavigable stretches (Fig 1.3). Given the growing importance of connections to the interior, and parallel plans for western expansion, it is unsurprising that the viability of each river, and the advantages that they afforded the established cities in the Union, became a focus for debate over the location of the Federal City. Furthermore, these debates spoke to the nature of inland settlement, their relationship to established urban centres, and their potential to support frontier expansion. They give one of the few indications of how the new seat of government was expected to sustain itself and accommodate surrounding settlements. They also prefigure more complex debates as to the pragmatic and ideological merits of infrastructural development, and the associated battle between federal and republican positions in the formation of a government strategy towards sources of national prosperity.[57]

The Congressional Record describes a series of motions in favour of sites on the Susquehanna, Potomac and Delaware rivers, each of which were repeatedly rejected by narrow majorities.[58] The failure to reach a consensus lay with the conflicting positions of various factions, but also reflected the difficulty of balancing the Union's physical geography, the distribution of its population, the relative wealth of the regions that this reflected, and the projected change and growth of all three. Setting aside the bias towards Philadelphia and the New England states' interests, as well as the resentments associated with them, the objective logics that steered Congressional debate revolved around the relative merits of the three rivers, the connections they provided between the Atlantic seaboard and the western territories, and the potential to establish navigable ports with access to inland settlements.[59]

William Maclay's diary suggests a strong preference for the Susquehanna River and little preliminary interest in the Potomac in the debates.[60] Initial support for the latter appears to have been scant and regarded with little more than ridicule in the House as well as the Senate. Mr Laurance (New York) noted that 'The people would not now

[57] Larson, *A Bridge, a Dam, a River: Liberty and Innovation in the Early Republic.*
[58] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:161-163,164, 249.
[59] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856."
[60] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates."

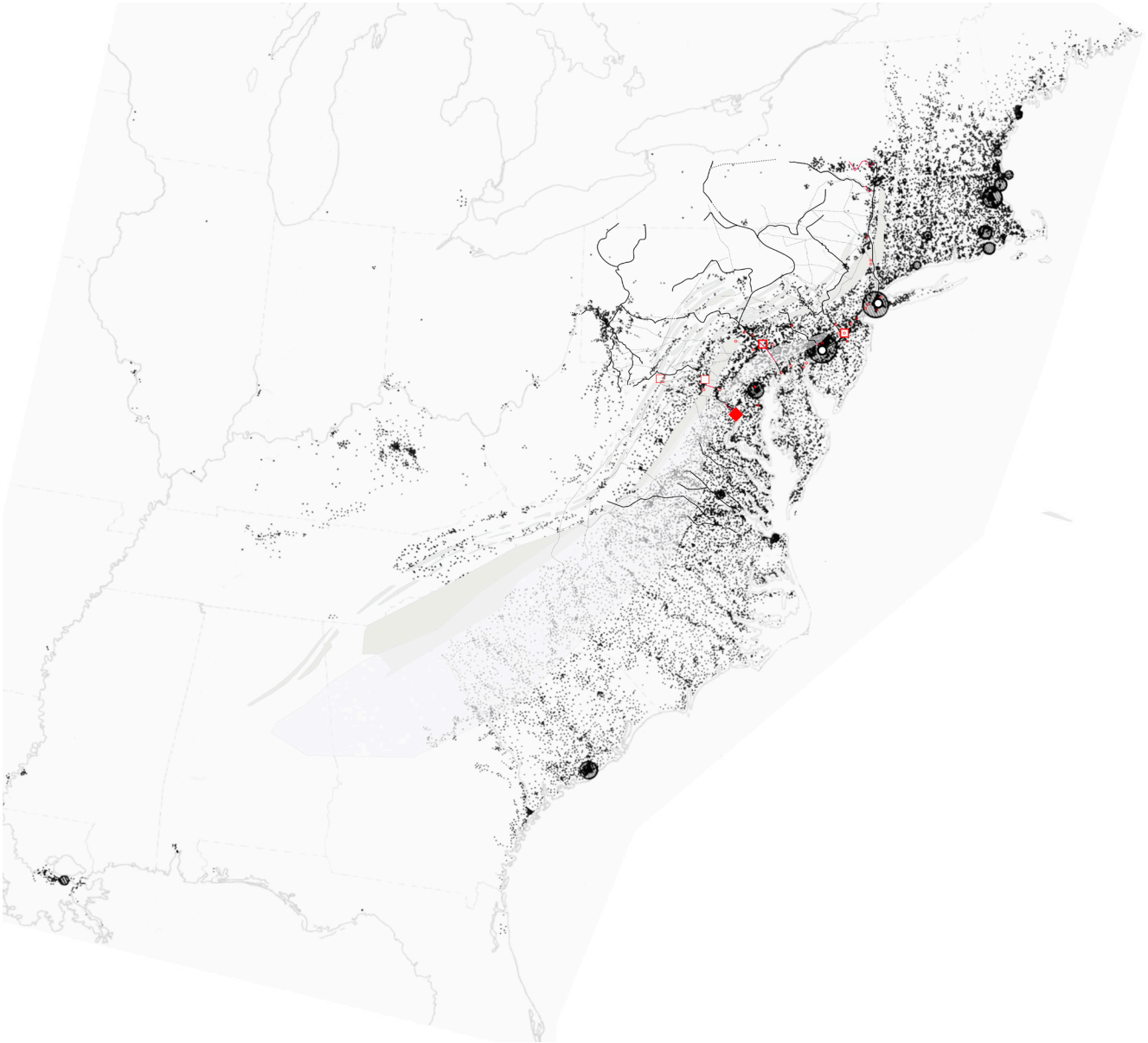

Fig. 1.4

Distribution of proposed sites for the Seat of Government
in relation to population distribution 1790

Mapping the proposed city sites against population distribution shows how the locations related to existing clusters. The grain of these clusters is markedly different to the North and South of the Potomac River. More northerly locations lie within a broader fabric of established towns, well connected by road and river.

Overlay by Author
Population density from: Hermann Friis "A Series of Population Maps of the Colonies and the United States, 1625-1790."

consent to have the Government dragged to so remote a part of the United States'[61] and Mr Gerry (Massachusetts) 'assert[ed] that taking so Southern a situation would amount to a disqualification of many of the Northern members, who would forego their election rather than attend the National Legislature on that river.'[62] By contrast, the Susquehanna, and for a period, the Delaware River, were seen to provide access to an established and productive interior as well as providing a viable middle ground between opposing concerns. Mr Hartley of Pennsylvania arguing in favour of the Susquehanna noted that:

> 'I consider this as the middle ground between the two extremes. It will suit the inhabitants to the north better than the Potomac could, and the inhabitants to the south better than the Delaware would. From this consideration, I am induced to believe, it will be a situation more accommodating and agreeable than any other. Respecting its communication with the Western Territory, no doubt but the Susquehanna will facilitate that object with considerable ease and great advantage; and as to its convenience to the navigation of the Atlantic Ocean, the distance is nothing more than to afford safety from any hostile attempt, while it affords a short and easy communication with navigable rivers and large commercial towns.'[63]

This was a contentious conclusion given the lack of unanimity regarding the proper centre of the Union, but furthermore, the snaking trajectory of both the Delaware and the Susquehanna rivers either bisected the interior disadvantageously for the South or required extensive improvements to provide a viable navigation and connection to inland waterways. The mouth of the Susquehanna and the Delaware rivers did indeed represent a median location for the extant population of the Union, but the navigation of both were orientated towards the north-west, providing an irregular division of the hinterland and privileging the growth of northern states as the frontier expanded (Fig.1.4). The Potomac, although it followed a more directly western path, was so scant in its settlement as to make its development appear absurd to representatives of more densely populated and commercially active states to the north (Fig. 1.4).

These seemingly insurmountable areas of conflict reflect the critical aspects of political discourse in the early republic that informed the context of the L'Enfant plan. They

[61] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, 244.
[62] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, 248.
[63] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, 146.

Fig. 1.5

A Ferry Scene on the Susquehanna at Wright's Ferry, near Havre de Grace.

While a popular proposed location for the Federal city, this image shows the crossing as thinly established and much less than a busy thoroughfare.

Pavel Petrovich Svinin
1811-13
Metropolitan Museum of Art

demonstrate the fragility of the early union, the uncertain scope of future growth of the physical territory, the distribution of its population, and its economic stability. This was amplified by the inherent suspicion that national infrastructure improvements might have the potential to jeopardise the primacy of state governance and individual liberty.[64] Each of these factors influenced the subsequent development of the plan for the capital, and placed limits on its ideological impact. In this respect, the debate over the location of the capital is a proxy for the distinct lack of controversy over the nature of the plan that eventually emerged. Here the self-interest of the states and their regions, the growing divisions between federal and republican factions, and their attendant assumptions as to land use, ownership, and commerce, were given an extensive rehearsal. In each case these issues proved intractable and reached a conclusion only through the personal influence of George Washington and the compromise reached over the federal assumption of war debt that was bartered for some, 'with a revulsion of stomach almost convulsive',[65] for a final decision in favour of the Potomac River location. The decision was neither necessarily correct, nor a fair reflection of national opinion. The more pragmatic arguments put forward for the location of the permanent seat and the relative merits of alternative sites from this discourse, however, provide significant insights into the expectations for the capital, and its potential to function as a viable settlement.

National Prosperity and the Parameters of Congressional Choice

Wright's Ferry on the east bank of the Susquehanna was one of the first locations to become a focal point of congressional discussions in 1789.[66] Early nineteenth century images of this section of the river show a rocky aspect with a precarious crossing (Fig. 1.5). However, the case for the location was established on several counts. Early in the congressional proceedings, Mr Hartley (Pennsylvania) described it as situated between two sections of navigable river, the upper part giving access to the Ohio and Alleghany

[64] Littlefield, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."
[65] Littlefield, 250.
[66] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:145.

Rivers ‘with very little land carriage’.[67] He went on to cite the extent of the existing settlement and:

> ‘ventured to pronounce, that in point of soil, water, and the advantages of nature, there was no part of the country superior’ and that: ‘it was in the neighborhood of two large and populous towns, one of them the largest inland town in America. Added to all these advantages, it possessed that of centrality, perhaps, in a superior degree to any which could be proposed’.[68]

The ability to serve as a node within an interconnected network, the opening of transport links more generally, the quality of land, and proximity to an existing population were clearly seen as critical to the success of the new capital. Mr Hartley’s position suggests that the new settlement was to be sustained by an established population with a strong agricultural basis to promote trade as well as bureaucratic communication with the existing union, and gain access to an expanding frontier. Such arguments proved central to the debate over alternative locations including those on the Potomac River.[69]

Fig.1.3 plots the proposed sites for the permanent seat of government documented by Kenneth Bowling[70] in relation to their trade networks. While there are a few anomalies, the proposals cluster at critical junctions between river-ports and existing road networks and establish a band along the latitudinal line aligning with Philadelphia at the eastern edge, and Cumberland, Maryland to the west. The clusters reveal an emphasis on continental expansion, a factor that could not have been accurately quantified at the time and was subject to considerable debate in relation to the concurrent settlement of the Northwestern Territories and the development of the Public Land Survey System (1785).[71] The decision facing congress in 1789 then had two critical facets, the first how to balance and placate competing powers within the Union, and second how to anticipate the nature, extent and direction of continental expansion. Access to the new

[67] Benton, 1:148.A connection between the Juniata branch and the *Kisskemanetas* (and through to the Ohio River) was authorized in 1826 as part of the Main Line of Public Works which introduced a network of canals and railways across Pennsylvania. The subsequent Allegheny Portage Railroad operated between 1834 and 1854 at which point it was supplanted by a wider network of railways.
[68] Benton, 1:148.. It can be assumed that the town that Harley refers to was Yorktown of Lancaster Pennsylvania, the latter being a settlement that went onto become the state capital from 1799-1812.
[69] Benton, 1:242–49.
[70] Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.* add information about map sources
[71] Hill, “Federalism, Republicanism, and the Northwest Ordinance.”

territory then contributed to the commercial, social and political value of the Potomac site. The question of the geographic balance of power hinged upon interpretations of centrality which were both ambiguous and highly contested. As noted by Mr Tucker of South Carolina:

> 'What is the centre of wealth, population, and territory? Is there a common centre? Territory has one centre, population another, and wealth a third… The centre of population is variable, and a decision on that principle now, might establish the seat of Government at a very inconvenient place to the next generation. The centre of territory may be ascertained, but that will lead to a situation entirely ineligible; consequently, whether these centres were considered separately or together they furnish no satisfactory direction, no possible guide to the committee.'[72]

The same arguments emerged in consideration of how a Federal City might serve a nation with an entirely different shape and demographic distribution. On 3 September 1789 this argument as to the projective direction of the Union became extensive and highly complex.[73] While early in the proceedings it was

> '*Resolved,* That a place, as nearly central as a convenient communication with the Atlantic Ocean, and an easy access to the western territory, will permit, ought to be selected and established as the permanent seat of the Government of the United States.'[74]

The strong lobby for the Susquehanna was met with equally strong opposition, Mr Jackson (Georgia) noting that the distance from Georgia to the River was twice that of the distance to Maine.[75] The injustice was deemed significant, Jackson asking:

> 'Are the eastern members to dictate in this business, and fix the seat of Government of the United States? Why not also fix the principles of Government? Why not come forward, and demand of us the power of Legislation, and say, give us up your privileges, and we will govern you?'[76]

[72] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:147.
[73] Benton, 1:145.
[74] Benton, 1:146.
[75] Benton, 1:149.
[76] Benton, 1:149.

This emotive claim reflected the difficulties of calculating a geographic centre of a nation without clear boundaries, Mr Lawrence (Pennsylvania) exclaimed, 'in taking the principle of territory, are the House to calculate on the uninhabited wilderness?'[77] This question of inhabitation pointed to an even more problematic argument over the centre of the national population and the promise held by yet uncultivated areas of the Union. This was made even more divisive in both the short- and longer-term history of the debate by the complete disregard for the slave population which was both significant in the South and essential to its prosperity.[78] Hence, beyond the personal antipathy between congressmen and the preconceptions as to the dangers of southern climes where, according to Sedgwick, 'Vast numbers of Eastern adventures have gone …and all have found their graves there,'[79] lay a wider question of finding an adequate measure of the new nation.

Mr Stone of Maryland spoke at length on the problems of such a decision, noting that he had 'not apprised, sir, of the extent of this continent certainly, because I never calculated it by figures, or measured it on the map.'[80] For James Madison, addressing the House on the following day, the rapid growth to the west of the Allegheny mountains was inevitable, claiming that, 'we may suppose the settlement will go on with every degree of rapidity which our imagination can conceive.'[81] He goes onto enthuse that '…if the calculation be just, that we double in twenty-five years, we shall speedily behold an astonishing mass of people on the Western waters.'[82] This reinforces Stone's position that

> '…we ought not only to have in view the immediate importance of the States, but also what is likely to be their weight at a future day; not that we should consider a visionary importance, or chimerical expectation, but such a one as can be demonstrated with as much certainty as effects follow their causes.'[83]

[77] Benton, 1:150.
[78] Benton, 1:150. In these proceedings Mr Sedgwick goes as far as to claim: 'will any gentlemen pretend, that men, who are merely the subject of property or wealth, should be taken into the estimate; that the slaves of the country, men who have no rights to protect, (being deprived of them all,) should be taken into view, in determining the centre of Government? If they were considered, gentlemen might as well estimate the black cattle of New England.'
[79] Benton, 1:150.
[80] Benton, 1:152.
[81] Benton, 1:156.
[82] Benton, 1:156.
[83] Benton, 1:152.

Stone's 'causes' are largely related to climate, but further concerns can be inferred by the relative distribution of the proposed locations. In mapping these locations (Fig.1.3) we can see that these form a band located along a complex network of road systems that joined river traffic to internal commerce and agricultural management. While delegates such as Mr Vining (Delaware) advocated a site on the Delaware river which might become a centre of north-to-south communication between existing states, through the opening up of a new passage between the Delaware and the Chesapeake Bay, the preference for inland settlements suggest an overwhelming positivism towards continental growth and a new capital orientated towards it.[84] The relative northern or southern biases of each site, while critical to rhetoric of union, can then be regarded as secondary to the location's capacity to support the development of the interior. The scale and potential of these new territories were uncertain however, and required a more detailed knowledge of their contribution to internal and foreign export trade, their viability for land acquisition, and the level of improvements necessary to make navigation possible.

At this early stage, prosperity was still heavily dependent upon agriculture, and the population was overwhelmingly rural with approximately 5% living in urban areas.[85] Until the 1820's, sources of income, while affected by the disruption of territorial battle, the War of Independence, and various trade embargos, remained relatively stable.[86] Studies of the urban and economic growth during the period identify a direct correlation between the growth of the population of the hinterland and that of their central cities.[87] In the cases of New York and Philadelphia the size of urban areas correlated with roughly 10% of its peripheral population until 1810 when advancements in manufacturing and industry precipitated a sharp rise in urbanisation. According to Simeon Crowther, 'spatially, the economic development … in the colonial period involved the expansion of these hinterlands through population growth and a widening of the area under cultivation.'[88] This provides a convincing basis for the First Congress's emphasis on access to the western territories, particularly given the

[84] Benton, 1:161.
[85] 1790 census: "Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States."
[86] Kim, Sukkoo, Margo, "Historical Perspectives on U.S. Economic Geography"; Lindert and Williamson, "American Incomes Before and After the Revolution."
[87] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness - The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742*; Crowther, "Urban Growth in the Mid-Atlantic States, 1785–1850."
[88] Crowther, "Urban Growth in the Mid-Atlantic States, 1785–1850," 627.

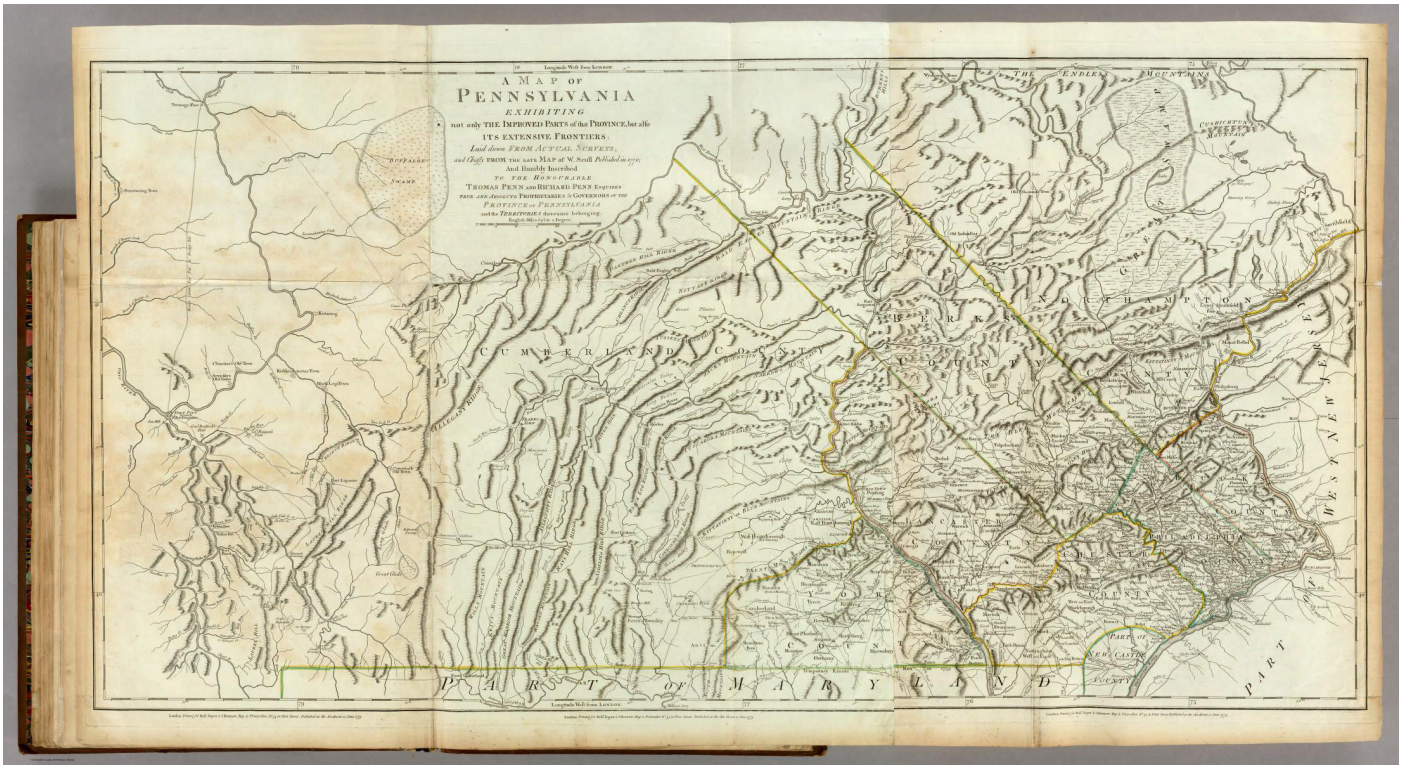

Fig. 1.6

Map of Pennsylvania

Thomas Jefferys,
Sayer and Bennett, London, 1776
Rumsey Collection
<a href=http://www.davidrumsey.com/rumsey/download.pl?image=/D0012/0346022.

experience of settlement in eastern (New England) and the Mid-Atlantic states, plans for the settlement of the Northwest Territories, and increased demands for fertile arable land. The diverse agricultural practices common to states north of the Potomac suited this form of expansion, land being distributed amongst relatively small-scale farms, cultivating produce and livestock, with milling and early mechanical advancement consolidating around waterpower. Such a model also sustained the apparent clustering of self-sufficient communities that formed the ideological basis for republican government.[89]

Organising Land Use

The geographic and economic merits of the alternative locations contextualise the prospects afforded by the Potomac; they also suit somewhat different criteria than a location at Alexandria / Georgetown. Washington, D.C. lies some fifty miles south of the swathe of alternatives running west from Philadelphia and marks a threshold between conventional small commercial farmland development, and the larger tobacco estates of Virginia and the cotton plantations of the Deep South (Figs 1.3 & 1.4). The spectrum of land management and their relative densities and characteristics also appears to have affected the development of networks across the southern and tidewater regions which, while served by major roads and former native trails, did not have the established system of interconnected communities common to inland Pennsylvania or New York (see Figs.1.6 and 1.7).[90]

The nature of land tenure and management practices in the South offer some explanation for this phenomenon. Dominated by cash-crop cultivation and large estates, there was little development at a scale that might support permanent communities beyond commercial ports such as Charleston. And while southern states experienced gradual growth, slaves accounted for 30-40% of their population, and their dispersal

[89] This is the subject of considerable debate both as to composition of communities in New England, see: Lemon, "Agriculture and Society in Early America." and the more enduring debate as to the nature of agrarian republicanism Appleby, "What Is Still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?" See also Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*. which is expanded upon here in later sections.

[90] Jefferys, "A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of New England, Containing the Provinces of Massachusets Bay and New Hampshire, with the Colonies of Conecticut and Rhode Island, Divided into Counties and Townships: The Whole Composed from Actual Surveys and Its Situatio"; Friis, "A Series of Population Maps of the Colonies and the United States, 1625-1790."

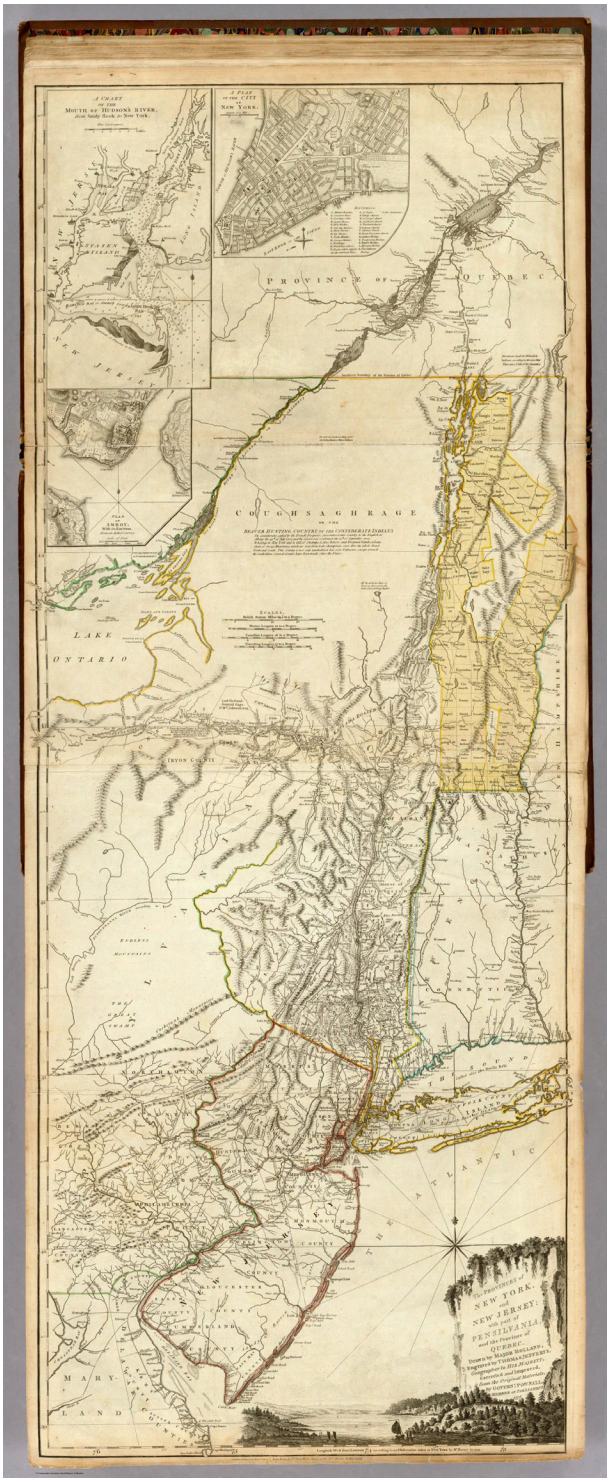

Fig. 1.7

The Provinces of New York, and New Jersey; with part of Pensilvania

Thomas Jefferys, with Samuel Holland (1728-1801)
Sayer and Bennett, London, 1776
Rumsey Collection
a href=http://www.davidrumsey.com/rumsey/download.pl?image=/D0012/0346020

amongst large plantations delayed urban growth. Furthermore, southern land management practices discouraged permanence. The deterioration of the soil caused by monoculture farming prompted the continuous expansion of estates towards the frontier. This cycle of decline and expansion then precipitated a seemingly unremitting dependence on slave labour to mitigate the losses incurred by shrinking yields and declining soil quality.[91] In this respect the southern states established patterns of inhabitation that contained inherent internal conflict between landowners, tenants and slaves, but also provoked tensions at the frontier over contested land claims.[92]

Such disputes were common along the entire U.S. western boundary as allegiances established between Revolutionary War factions and native populations produced pockets of frequent violence in which frontier farms and settlements were routinely destroyed.[93] This level of instability appears to have affected the growth of towns in the South more notably than in the North.[94] While both experienced the boom-bust cycles of land speculation and violent loss depicted in Crèvecoeur's *Susquehanna* and Cooper's *The Pioneers*, the inland areas of Pennsylvania and New York saw a steady growth of moderately scaled and well-connected communities that suggest a greater degree of permanence.[95] This pattern of development is related to the adoption of more conservative farming practices involving the diversification of crops and livestock and the introduction of moderately scaled, water-based mechanisation for secondary production such as textiles and grain.[96] These practices depended on a stable community and an extensive internal and external trade network, which in turn led to a general distrust of the social destabilisation offered by migration to a volatile western frontier.[97] This form of development offered a transition to the industrialised processes that eventually prompted the mass urbanisation of the nineteenth-century America, and drew upon early colonial land management practices as outlined by Reps and others, by which villages and their hinterlands were settled in parallel, and their expansion carefully controlled.[98] Northern and southern regions did not adhere to these two models

[91] Sturges, *Dwelling on the Land: The Literature of Agriculture in the Early American Republic*.
[92] Gallo, "Imaginary Lines, Real Power: Surveyors and Land Speculation in the Mid-Atlantic Borderlands, 1681-1800."; Gallo, "Improving Independence: The Struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794."
[93] Gallo, "Improving Independence: The Struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794."
[94] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."
[95] Sturges, *Dwelling on the Land: The Literature of Agriculture in the Early American Republic*.
[96] Sturges.
[97] Sturges.
[98] Reps, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center*.

exclusively - the South containing its share of smaller farms, particularly in the Appalachian region, and Mid-Atlantic territories being home to several dominant land-owners dependent on incomes from tenant farmers. However, the choice of site for the capital placed the federal government, and the city that was intended to grow up around it, on a threshold between two traditions of settlement.

Thus, the capital was established at the boundary between not only the North and the South but between two radically divergent forms of settlement, township, and commerce that accompanied their political differences. The drivers of growth and the establishment of cities in the northern states, namely the size and fertility of their hinterlands and access to transport, do little to explain the lack of urbanisation of the upper South, which benefitted extensively from both.[99] Positioned between the more intensive and diverse farming practices in states such as Philadelphia and New York, and the slave dependent monocultures of the Deep South, it is difficult to determine which economic or land management model the new city could be expected to benefit from, and the nature of settlement that might emerge as a result. A review of contemporary land practices has never been related to the plan for Washington, D.C. but I argue that it is essential to understanding any basis for new settlement.

Tidewater Settlement

As a boundary between the two regions, Northern Virginia and Southern Maryland had long established their own regional farming methods based on tobacco cultivation. These were diversified in the eighteenth century to include wheat, to exploit European shortages, and corn to sustain the slave population. This pattern of development underwent a further transition in the late eighteenth century as landowners sought more sustainable methods for long-term cultivation and soil rotation as seen in western Pennsylvania. These ambitions were matched by the rhetoric emerging from the writings of local landowners including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, which projected the region as holding a potential for enlightened agriculture and husbandry practices.[100] They intended such responsible and sustainable land use to

[99] Kim, Sukkoo, Margo, "Historical Perspectives on U.S. Economic Geography."
[100] Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*; "Washington and the New Agriculture: Introduction to the Diaries of George Washington."

ensure the prosperity of the nation and the moral stability of its citizens. While the Potomac Valley never fully diversified, the exemplary status described by the President and Jefferson established the hypothetical landscape into which the new capital could be placed. It is this projected future condition as well as the reality of the site that informed arguments in Congress, explains the depth of George Washington's private interests in the site, and relates the choice of location to the wider ideological direction associated with Thomas Jefferson's ambitions for an agrarian republic.[101]

Alongside this emphasis, the site's advocates in Congress and Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* championed it as the obvious and most direct gateway to the West, and the most equitable location in the physical extent of the Union.[102] However, neither established the conditions for settlement nor suggested a suitable model for the city's character. It is cited by Mr Vining (Delaware) as a necessary…

> 'centre from which those streams are to flow that are to animate and invigorate the body politic' extending west '…to that region the unpolished sons of earth are flowing from all quarters; men, to whom the protection of the laws, and the controlling force of the Government, are equally necessary.'[103]

But the physical extent and ability for the city to function socially or commercially is not addressed. Nevertheless, given the intentions for the region to become an exemplar of an independent diverse farm-scape, I argue that the model for the city reflected in the congressional debates was closer to the small settlements of Pennsylvania which depended on a growing manufacturing and services sector, than to the port cities of Philadelphia or New York.[104] These urban models were not exempt from speculation, particularly given the relative comfort of the temporary residence of government in New York at the time, and the distaste with which Mid-Atlantic and New England Congressmen viewed the South. Several congressmen rejected the Potomac as a backwater and a health risk to visitors,[105] while others challenged the wisdom of such a

[101] Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic."
[102] Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*, 17–18.
[103] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:150. (Mr Vining)
[104] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness - The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742*.
[105] Mr North. It is the opinion of all the Eastern States, that the climate of the Potomac is not only unhealthy, but destructive to northern constitutions. It is of importance to attend to this, for whether it be true or false, such are the public prepossessions. Vast numbers of Eastern adventures have gone to the Southern States, and all have found their

remote situation and 'building a palace in the woods,'[106] Congressman Levermore noting that:

> 'there is a river, it is said, which runs two hundred miles into the country as far as the Allegany mountains; what advantage can this be to Congress? I can conceive none, except that it may be to send the acts of Congress by water to the foot of the Allegany mountains.'[107]

Others suggested, somewhat prophetically that there was little reason to believe that the population of the area around the Potomac would grow in the following ten years,[108] as well as more urgent worries about the 'machinations of the speculators' who behaved as 'rapacious wolves.'[109]

A far greater number of congressmen expressed suspicions as to the city's corrupting influence on government. Congressman White suggested that 'with respect to the uncentral situation of the seat of Government in other countries, this arose from the mere whims of the sovereigns of those kingdoms; but modern policy has obliged the people of European countries… to fix the seat of Government near the centre of trade' and he asks:

> 'it is the commercial importance of the city of London which makes it the seat of Government; and what is the consequence? London and Westminster, though they united send only six members to Parliament, have a greater influence on the measures of Government than the whole empire besides. This is a situation in which we never wish to see this country placed.'[110]

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graves there; they have met destruction as soon as they arrived.' Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:150.

[106] Benton, 1:243. (Burke)

[107] Benton, 1:247.

[108] the' place is not, at present, a suitable position. By what magic can it be made to appear it will be more proper at the end of ten years? What reason can be given why those parts of the Union should not populate which are at a distance from the Potomac, in proportion to those parts in the vicinity of that place?'Benton, 1:244.

[109] Benton, 1:184.

[110] Benton, 1:242–43.

This led to a suspicion that such a location would privilege the commercially oriented cities of the Mid-Atlantic region and New England, but it was also rooted in the ideals of American independence, and central to the principles of republicanism.[111]

George Washington's own substantial land-interests and investments may have biased his view towards a federalist position - by which large, organized agricultural export companies, extensive land speculation and new technologies, would advance national prosperity. However, his writing at the end of the eighteenth-century advocated for a form of responsible diverse land management witnessed in smaller holdings managed by resident landowners.[112] At the time of the debates on the permanent seat of government, George Washington was engaged in a survey of agricultural practices in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey that was to include land values, tenancy costs, crop and livestock prices and yields, husbandry and taxes. When distilled in his *Letters from his Excellency (to Sir John Sinclair)* this work framed the area surrounding what would become the Federal City as sharing the agricultural outlook and commercial future of the mid-Atlantic region.[113] Here the hinterland was envisaged as a carefully managed setting served by a citizenry that contributed to the national good through their responsibility for the land that they owned and tended.

George Washington's ambitions were in harmony with Thomas Jefferson's own republican ideals in this respect, but his strategies were otherwise incompatible. Washington supported the founding ethic of the moral good of the self-sufficient farmer, but he married this to a federalist vision of national progress and coordinated economic advancement. His position reflects the wider ambiguities of the early American political economy and the relationship of a unifying figure such as George Washington to it. On one hand, he and Jefferson supported the independent freedoms associated with small decentralised government and believed that the basis for moral good resided in the individual liberties and responsibilities of the landowner; on the

[111] Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*; Matson and Onuf, "Toward a Republican Empire: Interest and Ideology in Revolutionary America"; Gould, "Virtue, Ideology, and the American Revolution: The Legacy of the Republican Synthesis"; Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[112] Washington, *George Washington Papers, "Notes & Observations" on Plantations*.
[113] It is also worth including here that the structure of the early American political economy reinforced hierarchies of privilege that were based on wealth. Those active in political life required private wealth and this wealth was derive from land ownership. The association of self-sufficiency with independence created a level of economic ambition as settlers attempted to create a degree of security for themselves and then for their offspring. https://archive.org/details/fascimiexcelle00washrich

other, President Washington supported Hamilton's plans for a national banking system, introducing capital and credit, which concentrated financial power, and diluted the independence of the farmers which the ideal pattern national growth was based upon.[114] It is difficult to separate this contradictory position from the management and expectations of Washington's own extensive land acquisitions. George Washington's will details holdings of close to 50,000 acres across Virginia, Maryland, what is now West Virginia and Kentucky, Pennsylvania, New York and the Northwest Territory (Ohio). He also held stock in the Potomack [sic] and James River Companies, the combined value of his property and investments amounting to over half a million dollars (approximately ten million by current value).[115] The scale of such investment and the speculation suggests an adherence to a pattern of national growth that favoured larger estates managed by remote landowners. In George Washington's case, much of his property along the western frontier was developed and farmed by tenants who could both fulfil the requirement to develop new holdings and secure property from further speculation.[116] His strategy proved to be more economically secure and politically intelligent than a slave-dependent economy and provided George Washington with both a stable income and an ideological distance from the plantation culture of the Deep South.[117]

This model of growth ran counter to the republican ideology upon which the independence movement had been founded and threatened to undermine the basis for individual freedom that the American Revolution had established. The conflict over these principles characterised public debate and private correspondence through the first decades of the nation's history and are the subject of considerable on-going academic disagreement. Both such historic areas of opposition and the contemporary discourse that attempts to untangle their often-contradictory positions, hinge upon the balance of individual moral character and their collective involvement in the national project. The revisionist position established by Pocock, Bailyn, Kramnick, Robbins, Banning and others has related the direction of the early American republic to the disputes between English Court and Country and the conceptual framework provided by the humanist

[114] Jefferson, "To George Washington from Thomas Jefferson, 15 February 1791."
[115] Washington, *The Last Will and Testament of George Washington and Schedule of His Property*.
[116] Humphrey, "Conflicting Independence: Land Tenancy and the American Revolution."
[117] Humphrey.

tradition and classical antiquity.[118] In response, Joyce Appleby's work in particular has regarded this position as an over-accentuation of the republican rejection of commerce, accusing the revisionists as painting Jefferson as 'the heroic loser in a battle against modernity.'[119] In her view his coordination of the settlement of the Northwest frontier, and support for expanding Atlantic trade, provided the basis for the advancement of liberal thought in the nineteenth century.[120]

The division of these positions is somewhat artificial as both Appleby and the revisionists make strong cases for the ambiguities evident in the behaviours and writings of the founding fathers. In each case, these figures engaged with national progress and the consolidation of their political theory in contradictory ways. The overriding concern was for the elimination of social injustice and the structures of privilege. For Jefferson and George Washington these emerged out of the feudal practices of land tenancy (with which both continued to engage personally through the late eighteenth century), executive authority, and the accrual of public debt. Banning argues that such anxieties over the corruption of liberty were drawn, not from a resistance to commerce but a rejection of mercantilism that echoed the concerns of the English Country Party in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[121] This interpretation clarifies early attitudes to the organization of the American agricultural landscape and the relationship of citizens to it. It also provides and explanation for the opposition to the effects urban life as experienced in cities such as New York and Philadelphia, where industry and a money economy threatened to subordinate pockets of society and corrupt the American character.[122] In this respect the debate over the nature and origins of American republicanism also provides a context for the scale and location of the plan for the capital, a centre intended to serve as an international beacon to rival European cities, and a commercial hub for an agricultural territory that extended deep into the western frontier, without resembling any aspect of urbanity as it was currently manifest in the Union. This makes an appropriate local precedent difficult to identify. Given the

[118] Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic"; Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*; Appleby, "Without Resolution : The Jeffersonian Tension in American Nationalism :"; Bailyn and Garrett, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1765*; Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited"; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*.
[119] Appleby, quoted in Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited," 4.
[120] Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic."
[121] Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited."
[122] Cress, "Whither Columbia?"

exemplary status of inland settlements in the mid-Atlantic region for George Washington and Jefferson, it is just as likely that a town of the character of Lancaster, Pennsylvania could provide a suitable model for the new capital as Philadelphia in terms of density, economic basis and quality of life given its role as temporary state capital and pre-revolutionary centre for agricultural commerce.

A smaller city of this kind would have been unable to provide the land-based revenue to establish the main public building of the Federal City, but it would have served as a spatial articulation of township/town hall as the paradigmatic political entity. Hannah Arendt bemoans the oversight of this catalyst for revolution and popular sovereignty in the structure of the Constitution. She quotes Benjamin Rush, noting that although 'all power is derived from the people, they possess it only on the days of their elections. After this it is the property of their rulers.'[123] The inherent contradictions of representational democracy were embedded in the structure of the American political system and played out in the unusually inflated scale of the Federal District. The United States was unwieldy in size at its point of founding and dependent on further expansion for the survival of the Union. However, the principles that had prompted its independence relied on more intimate scales of exchange both political and commercial. I argue that this paradox is at the heart of the decision over the location of the Federal City and the eccentricity of the plan that emerged for its development.

Potomac

The decision over the location for the seat of government, and as congressman Vining stated in September 1789, '…whether Congress are to tickle the trout on the stream of the Codorus, to build their sumptuous palaces on the banks of the Potomac, or to admire commerce with her expanded wings, on the waters of the Delaware'[124] is then entirely in keeping with such a contingent situation. The rhetoric that accompanied this choice was the same used in support of the Susquehanna in earlier congressional proceedings,

[123] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 239.
[124] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:150.

amplified by George Washington's promotion of the Potomac Valley as a new paradigm of an agrarian republic.[125]

The need to preserve a distance between the new capital and existing urban centres, lest they dilute one another's position within the region, was ancillary to the importance of westward expansion. Both factors go some way to explaining the debate over the choice of inland sites but do little to justify its conclusion. The final location and extent of the District were ultimately determined by George Washington who established the unprecedented scale for the new city. The district was designated to extend to the maximum area allowed by the Constitution in 1788, and it absorbed the existing settlements in Alexandria, Virginia and Georgetown, Maryland. George Washington's private interests in the location of the Federal City were never challenged directly by Congress, but William Maclay's dismay provides an insight into the potential discomfort that Washington's personal validation of the site elicited, given his status as figurehead and war hero. He notes:

> The President of the United States has (in my opinion) had a great influence in this business. The game was played by him and his adherents of Virginia and Maryland, between New York and Philadelphia, to give one of those places the temporary residence, but the permanent residence on the Potomac. I found a demonstration that this was the case, and that [New] York would have accepted of the temporary residence if we did not. But I did not then see so clearly that the abominations of the

[125] Washington was an experienced surveyor and held an extensive collection of maps in his library: The library inventory listed more than ninety maps and atlases, including John Henry's 1777 Map of Virginia; Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson's Map of the State of Virginia; Reading Howell's 1777 Map of Pennsylvania; Thomas Hutchins's Map of the Western Part of Parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina; Lewis Evans's Map of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware; "Sundry Plans of the Federal District" (including "One Large Draft"); Thomas Jefferys's West India Atlas and American Atlas; Molls Atlas; William Faden's North America Atlas; Christopher Colles's 1789 Survey of the Roads of the United States; and Jedidiah Morse's 1789 American Geography. see: https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/articles-and-essays/george-washington-survey-and-mapmaker/washington-as-land-speculator/ Before his rise to prominence through military endeavour, Washington's means were limited. He was the descendant of Royalists who had fled England in 1657 and settled in Virginia. His father had worked hard to establish his family in Virginian society and typical of the period; his sons were taught to cultivate their gentility as a means of social promotion. It was this society to which the young Washington aspired, aligning himself in his adolescence to his brother Lawrence's father-in-law, Lord Fairfax. It was Fairfax who introduced George Washington to Addison's Cato and most probably to the figure of Cincinnatus, which were to be identified as his most critical inspirations. Until this period Washington had been self-taught, the bulk of his learning being related to agricultural cultivation, horsemanship, and knowledge of the wilderness of western Virginia. Washington's only formal training was as a surveyor, certified in Culpepper County, Virginia in 1748 at the age of 17. Lord Fairfax sponsored this qualification, and it was the subsequent survey of the family's colonial holdings in the mountains of western Virginia that enabled Washington to buy land, although it was not until his marriage to Martha Custis in 1759 that he acquired real wealth and position in Virginian society. Washington et al., *The Papers of George Washington: October 1757-September 1758*.

> funding system and the assumption were so intimately connected with it. Alas, that the affection--nay, almost adoration--of the people should meet so unworthy a return! Here are their best interests sacrificed to the vain whim of fixing Congress and a great commercial town (so opposite to the genius of the Southern planter) on the Potomac…[126]

George Washington's vested interest in the site was apparent, as was his long-term support of the development of the Potomac river as a viable competitor to trade via the Great Lakes to the port at New York.[127] The intention for the permanent seat of government to become a large urban centre was not articulated, however the commercial advantages of the location had been apparent to George Washington for some time. He conducted a provisional survey of the area in 1753 as part of his mission to the Ohio Valley (Fig.1.8).[128] It detailed the benefits of this potential route to the West, emphasising a strong line of connection between the Potomac and Ohio Rivers, and a virtually continuous thread of navigation to the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, and Lake Erie.[129] These advantages were widely embraced as early as 1784. Writing to Washington on 15 March, Thomas Jefferson noted that 'nature then has declared in favour of the Patowmac[sic], and through that channel offers to pour into our lap the whole commerce of the Western world.'[130] Even for such a strong advocate of agrarian republicanism 'all the world is becoming commercial'[131] and the strength of such a route to the west was deemed essential to future prosperity.

For Washington, the benefits of the Potomac had been obvious for some time. Writing to Jefferson, he claimed that

> '…more than ten years ago I was struck with the importance of it, & dispairing of any aid from the public, I became a principal mover of a Bill to empower a number

[126] Maclay, Veit, and Bowling, "The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates," 329.
[127] Washington, Jackson, and Twohig, *The Diaries of George Washington*, 57–71.
[128] Jefferys, Evans, and Sayer, "A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America: Viz. Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pensilvania, New-Jersey, New-York, Connecticut, and Rhode-Island."
[129] Washington, G. & Toner, J. M. (1865) *The journal of Major George Washington: sent by the Hon. Robert Dinwiddie to the commandant of the French forces in Ohio: with a map*. New York: Reprinted for Joseph Sabin. [Web.] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://lccn.loc.gov/03011068. The map printed with the journal was: "Map of the western parts of the colony of Virginia, as far as the Mississipi." Map. 1754. *Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center*, https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:q524mt71(accessed October 30, 2020). This forms part of: Fry, Joshua, Approximately, Peter Jefferson, and Thomas Jefferys. *A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland: with part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina*. [London, Thos. Jefferys, 1755] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/74693089/.
[130] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 15 March 1784."
[131] Jefferson.

> of subscribers to undertake, at their own expence [sic], (upon conditions which were expressed) the extension of the Navigation from tide water to Wills's Creek (about 150 Miles) and I devoutly wish that this may not be the only expedient by which it can be effected now.'[132]

Indeed, Washington had been involved in efforts to open a navigation on the Potomac as early as 1769 and was involved with several Bills for the clearance of the river that were reported in December of that year, 1772 and 1775, as well as being a founding trustee of the Potomac Company from 1774.[133] The momentum behind the project was disrupted by intercolonial conflict prior to post-Revolutionary union and halted almost entirely by the Revolution itself. However, the opportunity afforded by locating a new and emblematic city at the head of the Potomac tidewater and the investment associated with such an enterprise was clearly advantageous to a larger commercial project that had been languishing for nearly two decades.

The extent of George Washington's vested interests and his personal influence over the choice of location of the Federal City may be treated with some suspicion and his experience of speculative land purchases both in the Tidewater and Western Virginia regions (now Kentucky) would tend to reinforce this view.[134] However, the endeavour represented by settling the western frontier related to shared assumptions about the nature of national success. Those involved regarded the development of a broad 'wilderness' as a moral imperative. Furthermore, they believed that national stability could be reinforced by the promise of limitless prosperity through the cultivation of an ever-expanding territory. And finally, the consolidation of an expandable system of representational government, and a complex commercial network, gave structure and

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[132] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784."

[133] Copeland and McMaster, *The Five George Masons*. See also, Bacon-Foster, "Early Chapters in the Development of the Potomac Route to the West," 120–21.
'A plan and estimate for opening the navigation of Potowmack River above the Falls being approved by many persons interested therein the following gentlemen are appointed Trustees by the subscriber to adjust and settle all matters related thereto; George Washington, George Mason, Thompson Mason, Bryan Fairfax, Daniel McCarty, John Carlyle, John Dalton, Wm. Ramsay, Robert Adam, Wm. Ellzey, John Hough, Jos. Janney, Isaac Lane, Robt. Rutherford, Abram Hite, Jos. Neville of Virginia, Gentlemen - Thos. Johnson Jr., Launcelot Jaques, Daniel Carroll, David Ross, Robt. Peter, John Murdock, Thos. Richardson, Thos. Johns, Wm. Deakins, Adam Stewart, Richard Thompson, John Hanson, Chas. Beatty, John Cary, Jacob Young, James Marshall, Dan. & Sam. Hughes, Thos. Cresap, Jonathan Hagar, John Stall of Maryland, Gentlemen ; - who are requested to meet at George Town on Saturday the 12th of November in order to elect and choose a small and convenient number of the Trustees which shall be a committee to act for the whole. This meeting is judged to be the more necessary as the subscriber is now at work on the locks at the lower Falls on the Maryland side of the river with what hands he has.'

[134] see last will and testament for full land holdings index: Washington, *The Last Will and Testament of George Washington and Schedule of His Property*.

Fig. 1.8

A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland: with part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina

Joshua Fry (c1700-1754). Peter Jefferson (1708-1757), Thomas Jefferys,
London, 1755
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3880.ar142700

stability to future land acquisition. Undoubtedly historic intercolonial rivalries frustrated an easy consensus as to the nature of this expansion. Established trade networks passed through New York and Philadelphia and these cities consolidated their political power as they served as conduits for national and international commerce. The initial bias towards locations along the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers fed anxieties as to the potential for amplifying the dominance of cities which were positioned at their mouths and controlled the surrounding hinterlands. In his letter to George Washington in 1784, Thomas Jefferson had already acknowledged the 'rivalship between the Hudson and Patowmac'[135] and while locations on the Hudson were not central to the congressional debates in 1789, related concerns remained apparent. The competition between river navigations then depended on an assembled knowledge of their relative value for transport and ease of trade.[136] For each proposal, there were considerable hurdles. Beyond the long-term development of commerce along the Potomac and George Washington's direct land investments in the region, each of the river sites under consideration required intensive restructuring to afford passage to the western territories.

Territorial growth and the settlement of the western frontier had a strong financial incentive. Land sales were an essential source of state revenue for the repayment of revolutionary war debts. While these were eventually relieved by the Compromise of 1790 in exchange for the Potomac location for the Federal City, the push to gain access to new lands by treaty or by force, remained critical to the early United States' commercial strength in the immediate aftermath of the War of Independence. River transport to the west on each tributary was hampered by the Appalachian range which provided a clear division between eastern and central river systems and entailed a significant change of elevation from tidewater to headwater. The history of this period and the conflicts associated with western settlement frontier is extensive and charts the transition from isolated community organisation to centralised political structures.[137]

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[135] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 15 March 1784."
[136] Shaw, "Canals in the Early Republic"; Mancall, Rosenbloom, and Weiss, "Commodity Exports, Invisible Exports and Terms of Trade for the Middle Colonies, 1720 to 1775."
[137] Gallo, "Improving Independence: The Struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794"; Gallo, "Fair Play Has Entirely Ceased, and Law Has Taken Its Place": The Rise and Fall of the Squatter Republic in the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River, 1768–1800"; Lemon, "Agriculture and Society in Early America"; Taylor, "American Urban Growth Preceding the Railway Age"; Littlefield, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."

The ambition to make the western territories accessible was the subject of a coordinated campaign as well as individual speculation. George Washington's own investment in such projects was substantial.[138] The establishment of Potomac Company in the mid 1770's was symptomatic of attempts to bring private financial endeavours together with proto-federal initiatives.[139] The Potomac project was tasked with clearing a navigable passage up-river through the series of rapids and falls that thwarted the development of inland commerce. The project proposed a canal through a gap in the Allegheny Front, an escarpment marking the continental divide between the waters of the Ohio/Mississippi Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. The project was linked to George Washington's land acquisitions, but also represented an early inter-state collaborative enterprise to secure trade with the inland territories from French and Spanish interests operating west of the Alleghenies.[140] Thus it serves as one of the earliest examples of 'federal' oversight of a project to realise shared commercial concerns for the Union, and while it ultimately failed in its objectives due to political uncertainty and economic instability, it represents an early stage in the formation of national commerce and an important antecedent of the capital city plan. The Potomac project, by supporting the combined interest of the Union, went some way to justify the location of the seat of government as a conduit for a system of continental trade to secure national prosperity and territorial security. Thus, while the establishment of a city of the size and complexity of Washington, D.C. was unprecedented, the scale and structure of its ambition was not.

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The arguments surrounding the decision to site the federal capital on the lower stretches of the Potomac River have several layers of importance. While previous accounts of this stage of the city's development have laid out the varying positions of the protagonists in great detail, the congressional debates and associated correspondence on the matter are of much greater importance than has been previously acknowledged. I argue that the choice of location reflected essential differences between two models of land economy and marked a transition point between a traditionally agrarian society and an increasingly mercantile and industrial future. Here the plan for the city, and the choice

[138] Washington, *The Last Will and Testament of George Washington and Schedule of His Property*.
[139] Littlefield, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."
[140] Shannon, "The Ohio Company and the Meaning of Opportunity in the American West, 1786-1795."

of its location, are representative of important ideological positions and practical transitions in American history. This thesis demonstrates that the choice of Potomac site reflects the inherent tension between a desire to support western expansion and secure national prosperity, and the need to keep these ambitions in check to secure better farming practices and a permanent sense of place. Thus, the creation of a new capital city is an example of the relationship between political ideology, the formation of the Union, and the relationship to the land being resolved pragmatically in response to a rapidly changing physical, political and economic environment - the need for a system of functioning institutions and practices overtaking the coherence of the ideology that informed them.[141] It is only with this understanding of the eighteenth-century political and economic context that it is possible to recognise the relationship of the L'Enfant plan to deeper notions of an emerging American pastoral and the associated ideals of the agrarian republic. Such shifting readings of nature, and the critical relationships between a cultivated and controlled landscape, form the subject of the next chapter.

[141] This is a position put forward by Hannah Arendt. See: Smith, "On Revolution: Arendt, Locke and Republican Revisionism."

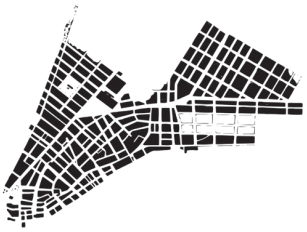
Chapter 2: Arranging Landscapes

As architect and historian Elbert Peets noted, 'nothing was then commoner in North America than founding towns, drafting plots and selling lots. The 'fiat city' and mushroom town were part of the colonial ideology.'[1] However, while this drive to expand and organise the town and the country, may have been typical, there remained no approved model for the city that was expected to emerge in such a climate of change and uncertainty. For George Washington, the Federal City was to reflect the scale of an empire that was yet to reach its full extent. A city of the scale depicted by the L'Enfant plan was unprecedented anywhere in the United States, and clustered settlement of any kind was scarce south of the Mid-Atlantic States, only one city, Charleston, below the Mason-Dixon line figuring in the top twenty in the 1790 census (Fig. 1.3 & 2.1)[2]

The unparalleled scale of the projected city suggests an unimaginable outcome, however the evident familiarity with territorial projects of this size and level of ambition places the design for the Federal City in the unique position of being planned as a lived city whilst being understood as a politically potent form of land management. Reconciling these two roles grounds the L'Enfant plan in two important traditions, first the use of the land survey as a vehicle to enable the delineation and hence control of distant

[1]Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets.*. p.5

[2] "Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States." In 1791 when L'Enfant's plan was produced, there were six cities with a population of more than ten thousand in the post-colonial United States; New York (33,131), Philadelphia (28,522), Boston (18,320), Charleston (16,359), and Baltimore (13,503).[2] All of these were considerably smaller in physical extent than what was proposed for the District of Columbia and were located in more established supporting hinterlands.



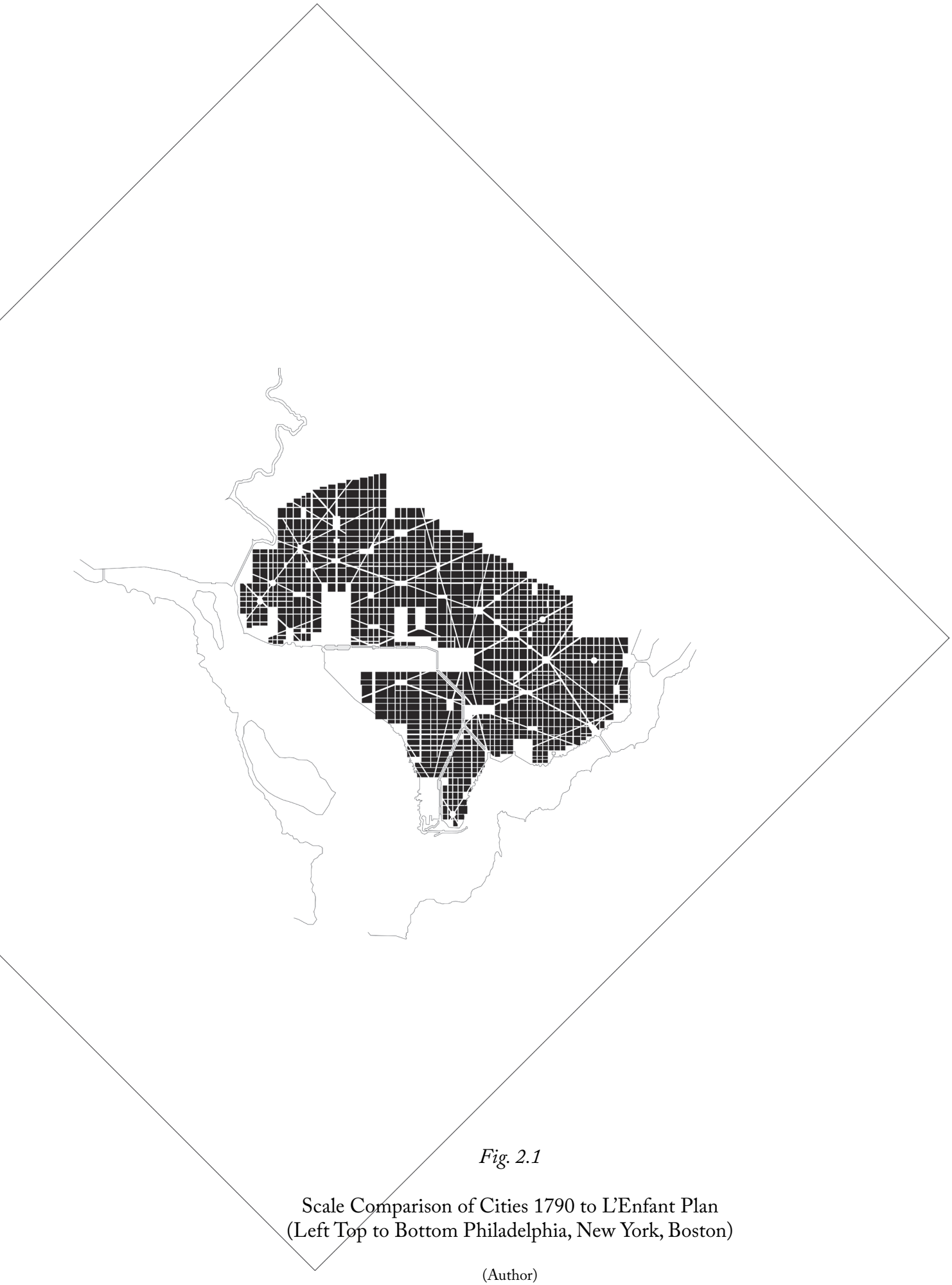


Fig. 2.1

Scale Comparison of Cities 1790 to L'Enfant Plan
(Left Top to Bottom Philadelphia, New York, Boston)

(Author)

unmeasured lands,[3] and second, the symbolic structuring of extensive landscapes within the evolving practice of eighteenth-century garden design. The plan for the Federal City is indebted to both. This chapter outlines the political significance of eighteenth-century land planning and explores the interdependence of such politically and economically motivated land management and the symbolic resonance of Pierre L'Enfant's interpretation of eighteenth-century landscape design. I argue that the pragmatic concerns of early national leaders and L'Enfant's own ceremonial intentions for the Federal City reflect a late-eighteenth century shift in the significance and meaning of nature and 'wilderness'. This thesis sets out to show that the plan for Washington, D.C. coincides with a turning point between Biblical and Classical interpretations of landscape, their instrumentalisation in support of the colonial imperative to 'civilise' the 'wilderness.' and the subsequent reappropriation of landscape imagery that established the foundations of nineteenth-century American Romanticism, its mythologising of the frontier and the concept of Manifest Destiny.

Building upon the analysis of the congressional debates and land use conventions explored in the previous chapter, this section places the siting and planning of the Federal City within a wider context of territorial land planning, colonial exploration and conquest, and the attendant shift in the role of landscape, mapping and spatial governance. This work draws on the careful analysis of the European garden and landscape tradition provided by John Dixon Hunt as well as more detailed American case studies advanced by Emily Cooperman.[4] It places this material within the wider context of the literature concerning American readings of nature and 'wilderness' such as that of Nash, Leo Marx and Oelschlaeger as well as the more theoretical interpretation of these trends provided by Olwig, Cosgrove and Cronon.[5] The theoretical framework that this literature provides is set against a close analysis of concurrent territorial planning projects, and documentation of the texts, maps and documents available to the critical protagonists that informed the direction of the Federal City plan. This chapter thereby identifies the choice of the Potomac location and the appointment of Pierre L'Enfant as an integral part of the American Enlightenment project and the

[3] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
[4] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*; Cooperman and Hunt, "The American Translation of the Picturesque."
[5] Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea."; Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness"; Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*; Nash and Miller, *Wilderness and the American Mind: Fifth Edition*; Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.

plans of the national founders to secure the new nation's global presence, commercial security and continuous growth.

Political Theory and Land Management

The shifting interpretation of nature was accompanied by early American anti-urban sentiment, which was derived from the rhetoric of its leaders, Thomas Jefferson in particular.[6] In the eighteenth century the majority of urban economic growth depended on trade with agricultural hinterlands. The rapid growth of cities was initiated by later nineteenth-century industrialisation.[7] National prosperity was intertwined with the capacity for extensive land acquisition, rapid national expansion and the cultivation of the continental interior. These pragmatic concerns were then conceptualised to bring the colonisation of the inland territories in line with the wider objectives of the union.[8] Here the apparently limitless potential of the continental interior insured both prosperity and freedom from want - an aspect of revolutionary liberation unique to the United States at the time.[9] This inevitably tied the settlement of the frontier to founding ideas of republican liberty, and the creation of a new capital city that might act as a conduit for these ideas had exceptional poignancy.[10] For historian J.G.A. Pocock, republicanism involved a departure from the pastoral ideal that had pre-occupied Antiquity, as within the American context there was a perceived relationship between the progress of civilisation and the taming of nature. This was represented by the transition from 'frontiersman' to 'yeoman' and the occupation of 'a "middle landscape" between the extremes of wilderness savagery and metropolitan corruption.'[11] Pocock goes on to argue that the 'image of the polis is therefore always in part Arcadian,'[12] an interpretation critical to our reading of the plan for the Washington, D.C. in that it describes a form of settlement that is neither landscape nor city. Within this context the extensive district, and Pierre L'Enfant's plan for it, can be read as an inhabited garden which, due to its vast scale and careful delineation, is spared the disordered growth of a conventional town, and the congestion of an established city.

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[6] Davidson, "Editorial: Why Not Anti-Urban?"
[7] Kim, Sukkoo, Margo, "Historical Perspectives on U.S. Economic Geography."
[8] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."
[9] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 377.
[10] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States." See also Cress, "Whither Columbia?" for the articulation of this position by members of the first congress.
[11] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 539.
[12] Pocock, 540.

Such a hybrid settlement was not simply an ideological construct - this 'middle landscape' also reflects the realities of inland America development of the period. As Carl Bridenbaugh's comprehensive work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century urban life describes, the American colonial urban experience consisted of a collection of cities of limited size connected by sea, tied together by the postal route that eventually connected Philadelphia to Charleston as late as 1740.[13] The remote character of these settlements gave them a relationship to their immediate hinterlands, and the frontier beyond that was more direct than their connection to one another. And while inland waterways made the interior increasingly navigable and continental trade more secure through the second half of the eighteenth century, the debate over where to site the Federal City took place within this context - that of a new, sparsely populated and thinly connected nation.[14]

The individual and coordinated federal efforts to settle the American interior were part of a wider national project to secure economic self-sufficiency and republican freedom.[15] The parameters for this growth, and the debates that surrounded them, were rooted in a contested understanding of the socio-political structures that would define the new territories and maintain an expanding but fragile union. These have been the subject of considerable discussion involving the nature of Jeffersonian republicanism, its view of commercial growth and relationship to liberal economic systems.[16] The apparent contradictions between standpoints, one that advocated for the dispersed independence of the publicly-minded yeoman farmer (traditionally associated with republicanism) and federal initiatives to centralise governance and commerce in order to

[13] Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness - The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742*.
[14] Cress, "Whither Columbia?"; Bodle, "The Fabricated Region."
[15] Hill, "Federalism, Republicanism, and the Northwest Ordinance"; Ballard, *The Land Ordinance Act of 1784: Defining the Political Geography of a New Nation*.
[16] J O Appleby, *Without Resolution: The Jeffersonian Tension in American Nationalism : An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 25 April 1991 /By*, Inaugural Lecture Series (Clarendon Press, 1992); Joyce Appleby, "What Is Still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (April 1982): 287, https://doi.org/10.2307/1918754; B Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Harvard Paperback: History (Belknap Press, 1976); Lance Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the New American Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (January 1986): 3, https://doi.org/10.2307/1919354; Kramnick, "The 'Great National Discussion': The Discourse of Politics in 1787." John Greville Agard Pocock and Richard Whatmore, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400883516; G S Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787* (London: University of North Carolina Press, n.d.). See also: Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."

secure a global presence and basis for national financial security, are also evident in the patterns of land distribution that were established in the late eighteenth century through instruments such as the Land Ordinances of 1784, 1785 and 1787.[17] These and the associated Land Survey system set the conditions for settlement, for commercial exchange and for the expansion of representational government. Most contributors to date have focused on the forensic interpretation of contemporary correspondence, personal accounts and congressional debate. This has provided rich enough results but has tended to disregard the relationship between the spatial organisation of the survey and its political significance. The principles of the Land Ordinances are critical to understanding the context for the scope and form of the L'Enfant plan for Washington, D.C. I argue that these principles also provide valuable insights into Thomas Jefferson and George Washington's understanding of the socio-political implications of physical patterns of settlement and the relationship of commercial centres to their inner-continental hinterlands. The far-reaching decisions contained in the Ordinances and Land Survey system and the connections they made between the distribution of land and the structure of representational government also give a strong indication of what these two leaders and their advocates may have expected of the L'Enfant plan.

The Land Ordinances and Land Survey

The War of Independence precipitated an abrupt release of land rights to the territories west of the Appalachians.[18] These had been acquired, settled and squatted in various efforts at colonisation over previous decades but remained highly contested and subject to losses incurred by conflict with the Native American population. Resident tribes had been relatively successful in playing British and French interests off against one another to maintain their rights to the land, but the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 consolidated British control of the region and secured their territorial interests as far as

[17] United States Continental Congress, King, and Johnson, "An Ordinance for Ascertaining the Mode of Disposing of Lands in the Western Territory"; United States Continental Congress, Lee, and Thomson, "By the United States in Congress Assembled. April 23, 1784"; United States Continental Congress, "A Supplement to an Ordinance Entitled, 'An Ordinance for Ascertaining the Mode of Disposing of Lands in the Western Territory.'"

[18] Gallo, "Imaginary Lines, Real Power: Surveyors and Land Speculation in the Mid-Atlantic Borderlands, 1681-1800"; Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*; Humphrey, "Conflicting Independence: Land Tenancy and the American Revolution"; Du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence*; Taylor, "Introduction: Expand or Die: The Revolution's New Empire"; Sturges, *Dwelling on the Land: The Literature of Agriculture in the Early American Republic*; Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."

the Mississippi. In order to avoid an ongoing and expensive military presence in defence of the newly acquired land, the British Proclamation line of 1763 prohibited settlement beyond the Appalachian range (see Fig.1.2).[19] The Proclamation Line removed legal access to land already acquired by colonists, amongst them George Washington whose own expansive land interests were jeopardised by the initiative.[20] The restriction also impeded the larger potential for the development of a significant basis for commercial farming to support regional economic growth.[21] The removal of rights to this new land generated a strong body of opposition to British rule and arguably marked a critical turning point in the development of revolutionary sentiment as it related to property rights and financial growth.[22] The abrupt removal of this constraint after the War of Independence then required a rapid framing of the physical and political structure of new territories within the union.[23] The organisation of these territories provides an important context for the planning of the Federal District.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 (preceded by those of 1784 and 1785) was an extensive strategy designed to organise the region into easily saleable lots of a size and scale that might extend republican governance to new states and structure their assimilation into the union. Concurrent to George Washington's investment in the Potomac River, the system established the principles and methods for the expansion of the American territory through structured surveys, land sales and a framework for the granting of new statehood.[24] The grid that the survey laid over the American mid-west created an armature for representational government, shaped the morphology and metabolism of central American cities, and characterized the field patterns of their hinterlands.[25] The physical and institutional organisation of the frontier became a vast Enlightenment project that fixed patterns of settlement, the scope of self-governance

[19] Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History"; Gallo, "Imaginary Lines, Real Power: Surveyors and Land Speculation in the Mid-Atlantic Borderlands, 1681-1800"; Roney, "1776, Viewed from the West." See also:Waldman, "Toward the Heart of America: The Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Development of American Identity."
[20] Del Papa, "The Royal Proclamation of 1763: Its Effect upon Virginia Land Companies."
[21] (Gallo, "Fair Play Has Entirely Ceased, and Law Has Taken Its Place": The Rise and Fall of the Squatter Republic in the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River, 1768–1800, 2012) (Gallo, Improving Independence: The Struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794, 2018) (Littlefield, 1985) (Sturges, 2013) (Dahl, 2014)
[22] Andrew, *Imperial Republics: Revolution, War and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution*.
[23] Taylor, "Introduction: Expand or Die: The Revolution's New Empire."
[24] United States Continental Congress, "A Supplement to an Ordinance Entitled, 'An Ordinance for Ascertaining the Mode of Disposing of Lands in the Western Territory.'"
[25] Higgins, *Subdivisions of Th Public Lands: Described and Illustrated with Diagrams and Maps*.

Fig. 2.2

A map of the United States east of the Mississippi River in which the land ceded by the Treaty of Paris is divided by parallels of latitude and longitude into fourteen new states

David Hartley (1728-1801)
Enclosed in letter from Hartley to Lord Carmarthan of January 9, 1785
William L. Clements Library
http://quod.lib.umich.edu/w/wcl1ic/x-813/wcl000907

and the financing of a public education system through land designations.[26] The Ordinances also secured a source of federal oversight and revenue to support further infrastructures of national expansion. Such projects were typical of the Post-Revolutionary period, which was characterised by a vast and abstract vision of settlement. The systematic nature in which land was surveyed, divided and sold also spoke to a level of ambition like that of the scope of the Federal City. The concurrence of the two projects enables them to be regarded in parallel. The critical difference between the projects is the level of discussion and documentation; while the Ordinances generated a significant level of political debate and subsequent interpretation,[27] the motivations informing the plan for the Federal City are only thinly evidenced. The scope and structure of the Northwest Ordinances suggests a correlation between the organisation and distribution of land and assumptions about the nature of settlement, the form of land cultivation and the system of government and political life that was expected to support new territorial citizens. This more direct relationship between political intention and spatial planning provides a valuable template for understanding what those who supported the Potomac site and the extent of the eventual plan, might have assumed about the size and character of the new city and its commercial and representation value.

The purpose of the Land Ordinances was largely political. The demarcation of the new territory to the West of the Appalachian set out to provide a clear system by which new and existing settlers might be brought under the oversight of the new nation. The problem was one of defining the nature of an extended and often remote polity whose population was not yet trusted with self-governance.[28] The impetus for the creation of new states was articulated in the first Land Ordinance of 1784 which was superseded a year later, and better defined and then ratified by the first Congress in 1787 and 1789 respectively.[29] The original document mapped fourteen new states (Fig. 2.2) as they had been envisaged by Thomas Jefferson. This formed three bands of states, those existing on the eastern seaboard, a new band, adjacent to the western edge of the territory and

[26] Geib, "The Land Ordinance of 1785: A Bicentennial Review."
[27] Ballard, *The Land Ordinance Act of 1784: Defining the Political Geography of a New Nation*; Berkhofer, "Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System"; Geib, "The Land Ordinance of 1785: A Bicentennial Review"; Hallock, "Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West."
[28] Roney, "1776, Viewed from the West"; Onuf, "Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s."
[29] Hartley, "A Map of the United States East of the Mississippi River in Which the Land Ceded by the Treaty of Paris Is Divided by Parallels of Latitude and Longitude into Fourteen New States."

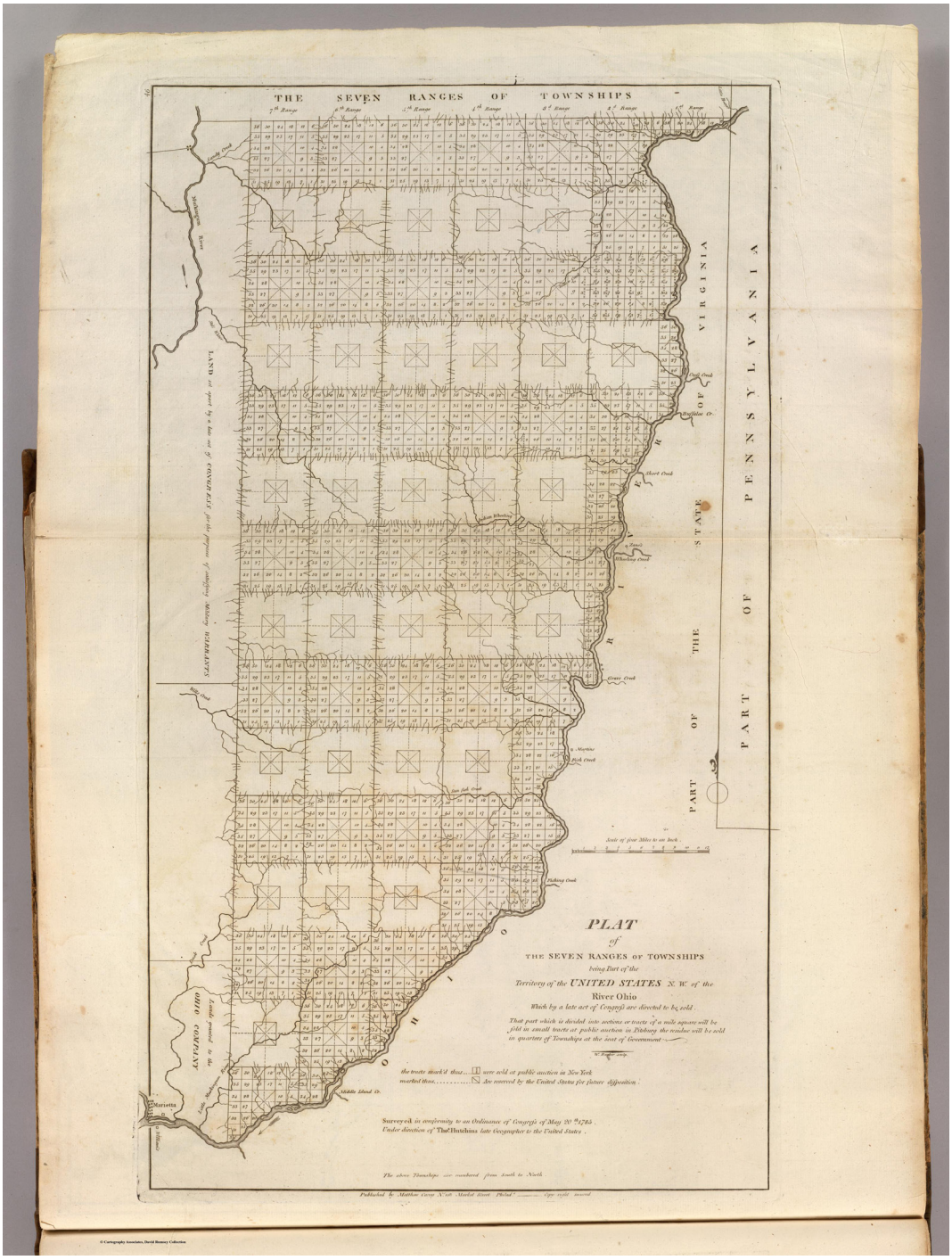

Fig. 2.3

Plat of The Seven Ranges of Townships

Matthew Carey
Philadelphia 1796
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4080.ct003223

the Mississippi River, and a middle band of smaller states to provide a buffer between the larger states with more advantageous trade routes.[30] The mirroring of scales of the new states reflected an ambition to disperse the population density of the eastern seaboard and the promotion of republican self-determination within the bounds of the confederacy. Initial concerns over the capacity for these new districts to overwhelm the legislative power of the seaboard states persisted but the designation was retained in principle. This first Ordinance of 1784 set out the conditions for liberty, political life and regulated self-governance.[31]

The Ordinance of 1785 then added the constraints for the physical development of the new territory and the basis for the size and arrangement of settlement. This detailed a grid of 'townships of six miles square, by lines running due north and south, and others crossing these at right angles, unless where the boundaries of the late Indian purchases may render the same impracticable.'[32] The system (Fig. 2.3), while direct and decisive in character had been the subject of considerable debate, particularly regarding the potential for sectional conflict in the purchasing and settlement of lands, and a broader divergence of ideas as to what form western expansion might take.[33] The nature of the new settlement was then defined by the particularity of the survey mechanism. This established the physiography of the new region as grouped into township clusters, each with an allocated proportion of civic land, the Secretary of War was allocated five of the thirty-six plots, and a central plot was reserved for the purposes of government, maintenance and education. It was envisaged that the remaining plots would be given over to yeoman farmers in full or partial divisions – the geometric evenness of the plan underpinning an anti-feudal division of property.[34] The proposed configuration reinforced a Jeffersonian political geography of representational governance and land

[30] Ballard, *The Land Ordinance Act of 1784: Defining the Political Geography of a New Nation*; Berkhofer, "Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System."
[31] United States Continental Congress, King, and Johnson, "An Ordinance for Ascertaining the Mode of Disposing of Lands in the Western Territory."
[32] United States Continental Congress, King, and Johnson.
[33] While Thomas Jefferson is understood to have been central to the decisions made over the detail of the Land Ordinances, he was by no means a singular voice. The correspondence of William Grayson, as well as the record of the continental congress, reveals a more complex set of debates active at the time. See also: Burnett, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*.; Grayson, "To George Washington from William Grayson, 15 April 1785."; Geib, "The Land Ordinance of 1785: A Bicentennial Review"; Berkhofer, "Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System," 261.provides a detailed analysis of the difference between the 1784 Ordinance and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 noting in conclusion that' the 1787 document should be considered more an extension and replacement than a repudiation of the Ordinance of 1784.'
[34] See also Hill, "Federalism, Republicanism, and the Northwest Ordinance."

cultivation as the basis for both stability and economic security. The project demonstrated an ability to translate political ideas into a process of land planning, setting an important and contemporary precedent for the planning of the nation's capital.

For Jefferson the distribution of the western lands for these purposes consolidated a land-based form of republican governance to reinforce an atomised confederation of self-sufficient communities of a size resilient to the corrupting influence of centralised government.[35] As David Howell of Rhode Island wrote to Jefferson:

> 'As its inhabitants will be mostly cultivators of the soil, republicanism looks to them as its guardians. When the states on the eastern shores, or Atlantic, shall become populous, rich and luxurious, and ready to yield their liberties into the hands of a tyrant, the gods of the mountains will save us, for they will be stronger than the gods of the valleys.'[36]

The system retained the potential to secure an otherwise incompatible relationship between an ever-expanding nation of an imperial scale, with international trade aspirations, and the level of personal freedom, collective enterprise and self-determination that was associated with republicanism.[37] At the time of the drafting of the Ordinances, there were three sets of critical concerns, the first being the threat of the new territory becoming dominated by lawless settlers. Secondly, the establishment of a free and dispersed polity appeared inconceivable, unwieldy, or vulnerable to the potentially authoritarian tendencies of a powerful centralised government. Thirdly, there was an abiding fear of speculative land companies harnessing a monopoly over large areas of the new territory.[38] All three represented the potential for the expanded union to become dominated by commercial corruption or an uncontrollable polity - neither of which might form a viable part of the new union and both of which might threaten its safety and prosperity.[39]

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[35] The system also reinforced the township as the primary measure of sovereignty, redressing its constitutional absence as bemoaned by Arendt. Arendt, *On Revolution*.
[36] "Editorial Note: Plan for Government of the Western Territory."
[37] Such a balance lies at the heart of the extensive debate as to the nature and origins of Jeffersonian republicanism as expressed in the work of Pocock, Bailyn, Wood et al, and countered by Joyce Appleby in particular.
[38] Henderson, "The Northwestern Lands of Pennsylvania, 1790-1812."
[39] Gallo, "Fair Play Has Entirely Ceased, and Law Has Taken Its Place": The Rise and Fall of the Squatter Republic in the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River, 1768–1800"; Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."

The antidote to these concerns was contained in the potential of those already settled, legally or otherwise, to become virtuous citizens of the new republic. For authors such as Crèvecoeur, the back-woods inhabitants were 'regulated by the wildness of the neighbourhood' the effects of which '…produce a strange sort of lawless profligacy.'[40] George Washington himself, who had surveyed and purchased land in the west before its formal release in 1783, was certain that:

> 'the settling, or rather overspreading the Western Country will take place, by a parcel of Banditti, who will bid defiance to all Authority while they are skimming and disposing of the Cream of the Country at the expence [sic] of many suffering Officers and Soldiers who have fought and bled to obtain it.'[41]

But however potentially lawless, the promise of expansion and the establishment of a cultivated landscape was at the heart of the American idea, as was the imperative of personal liberty.

Counter to the potential for lawlessness, the gift of self-determination was seen by many, such as Jefferson, as the means by which settlers might develop into virtuous citizens.[42] The consolidation of pockets of citizens within new townships perpetuated ideas of popular sovereignty as a social force in the service of civil society.[43] Furthermore, the relative distance from the Atlantic states gave the new territory the potential to anchor the economic future of the nation in agricultural production and the political merits of a future yeomanry. The Federal City was to serve as a gateway to and a source of authority over this dispersed territory.

The scale of L'Enfant's plan, however, was at odds with this idea of an atomised nation. For Jefferson, the priority was the preservation of the republic as a means by which to ensure freedom from tyranny as well as freedom from want. By maintaining a suitably small scale of state, and then township subdivision, the mechanisms of representational government might be able to operate without becoming

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[40] Crèvecouer, *Letters from and American Farmer*, 67.
[41] Washington, "From George Washington to James Duane, 7 September 1783."
[42] Hill, "Federalism, Republicanism, and the Northwest Ordinance"; McLaughlin, "The Foundations of American Constitutionalism." McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*.
[43] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States," 141.

too distant or abstract from the represented population as to render them irrelevant or inactive within public life.[44] For early American republicans, corruption had its roots in a system of dependence and hierarchical networks. By contrast, land ownership and agricultural commerce insulated the inland settler from both - the system of land distribution and the physical proximity to structures of local governance, encouraging robust self-sufficiency and mutual self-interest.[45] The increasingly dispersed population decreased potential reliance on industrial forms of subsistence and the creation of dense urban centres, the latter being regarded as a poisonous European inheritance. The fear of urban depravity was not limited to the relationship between individual citizens and the possibility of their corruption; to financial dishonesty through speculative investment; or more base criminal acts; but to the larger idea of such corruption being at the root of authoritarian government. The creation of great disparities of wealth and status, as well as America's own economic crisis of the 1780's, were seen to be encouraged by a rise in manufacturing, derived from more densely populated regions with little opportunities for land ownership.[46] Such abiding distrust of the effect of urban life upon the American populous makes the 1791 plan for an unprecedently large new city appear incongruous. However, the balance of agrarian expansion, national prosperity and civic order necessitated the creation of a political centre to manage an otherwise atomised union.

In addition to the need for a federal authority, the creation of a new civic centre was not necessarily inconsistent with republican aims. The anxiety concerning unwieldy dense centres of commerce was pervasive, but the Land Ordinances and the Public Land Survey system that it generated were not designed to perpetuate isolated communities. Both Jefferson and George Washington were eager to open the western territories not only to extend the republic but to facilitate continental commerce and resolve outstanding war debts through land sales. Writing to William Grayson on 26 July 1786, George Washington noted:

> 'I wish very sincerely that the Land Ordinance may answer the expectations of Congress. I had, & still have my doubts of the utility of the plan, but pray devoutly, that they may never be realized, as I am desireous of seeing it a productive branch of

[44] Dahl, 113–18.
[45] Ballard, *The Land Ordinance Act of 1784: Defining the Political Geography of a New Nation*. Taylor and Foner, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America (The Penguin History of the United States, Volume 1)*.
[46] Lindert and Williamson, "American Incomes Before and After the Revolution."

> the revenue. That part which makes the waters & carrying places common highways, & free for all the States, is certainly valuable.'[47]

Figures such as political economist Tench Coxe (1755-1824) who co-authored the *Report on Manufacturers* with Alexander Hamilton in 1791 (the same year as the design for the Federal City)[48] was an explicit advocate of expansion for this purpose.[49] For Coxe, territorial growth was a means of developing economic diversification and a robust national marketplace. Coxe's position was not typical nor popular. Growth was not regarded as inevitable or necessary given the already dispersed population of the union. The confederation of states was still highly vulnerable and Hamilton's suspicions that the 'opening up of vast new areas for settlement would imperil interregional comity and compromise American security'[50] were widely shared. The release of revenue from land sales, however, was necessary to resolve millions of dollars of national and state war debt.[51] Coxe, as well as Jefferson and Washington understood that this expansion would then depend upon on the successful and close integration of these new hinterlands. Integration in turn would rely upon well-coordinated agricultural production and a developed transport network. The establishment of a permanent seat of government can then be regarded as yet another facet to securing the stability of this network - the Federal City holding the potential to serve as a focal point for an expanded polity and a conduit for inner continental trade. The Ordinances and land survey then operated reciprocally as critical precursors to the establishment of a political centre on the banks of the Potomac River and lent legibility to its pragmatic and symbolic organisation.

The ambition embedded in the Ordinances saw the gradation of plot, township, state and union working in concert, structured around a fluid system of trade and a large, active and organised polity. The idealised geometric subdivision of land then appropriated the 'wilderness' beyond the Atlantic states as part of a highly specific system of societal structure and went some way to reconciling the independence of the agrarian republic with the federal infrastructural projects that were necessary to sustain it. The embedding

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[47] Grayson, "To George Washington from William Grayson, 15 April 1785."
[48] Hamilton, *Alexander Hamilton's Famous Report on Manufactures: Made to Congress December 5, 1791, in His Capacity as Secretary of the Treasury*.
[49] Öhman, "Perfecting Independence: Tench Coxe and the Political Economy of Western Development."
[50] Quoted in: Öhman, 398.
[51] According to Treasury records, in 1783 the U.S. government owed $43 million to European governments and $25 million was owed by states collectively in 1790.

of a means of livelihood, a system of social organisation, popular sovereignty and civic finance, in a land survey standard, is evidence of a shared understanding of the correlation between the laying out of plots and the political organisation of the nation. The parallel interest in taming, or 'civilising' the frontier was aligned to this objective and the Ordinances provided an abstract tool by which to neutralise the perceived volatility and uncertainty of a seemingly chaotic frontier. The comprehensive nature of the plan for the Federal City and the potential for its dispersed settlement at the gateway to these new parts of the union demonstrate important correlations between the two initiatives.

The absorption of the Northwest Territories as a part of the confederacy, while defined with significant detail and will, also represented a leap of imagination over what had been the hitherto insurmountable obstacle of the Appalachian Range. Not only did the mountains represent a physical challenge, but they represented a division of outlook and orientation. The Atlantic states were focused eastward toward European markets, while west of the range, trade routes travelled down the Mississippi River and out towards the Caribbean. Furthermore, this land had been the site of decades of conflict – this being a proxy for the international divisions between British, French and Spanish imperial powers, navigated through both long-standing and transient allegiances with the Native American population. This context had perpetuated a level of isolation and independence amongst the communities that had persisted through the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the success of their integration, however well established in law, was not certain.[52] The bid to bring the west into line with the eastern states underpins not only the organisation of the land to tailor this new region of popular sovereignty to the structures of established statehood, but it predetermined a mode of production and commerce that was modelled upon existing patterns. The physical transformation of this land equated settlement with cultivation, as much as it was tied to new forms of legal ownership.[53]

[52] Roney, "1776, Viewed from the West"; Gallo, "Fair Play Has Entirely Ceased, and Law Has Taken Its Place": The Rise and Fall of the Squatter Republic in the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna River, 1768–1800."
[53] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States"; Gallo, "Improving Independence: The Struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794"; Lemon, "Agriculture and Society in Early America"; Sturges, *Dwelling on the Land: The Literature of Agriculture in the Early American Republic*.

Both strategies, and the scale of their intentions were predicated on a radical shift in attitude towards the perceived wild-ness of the continental interior. This transition is well documented in Roderick Nash's work, Leo Marx's literary review of the creation and disruption of the pastoral landscape, and the subsequent reappraisal of 'The Wilderness Condition' by Karl Oelschlaeger.[54] Each of these texts mark the gradual demystification and evolving adulation of untamed nature as it was articulated from Classical to Modern periods. The eighteenth century represented a critical turning point, as scientific discovery collided with new approaches to exploration, the extension of empires and the reframing of the nation-state, each of which impacted the inhabitation of the natural landscape as well as attitudes towards its transformation.[55] Within an American context, such a shift is particularly poignant, as are the areas of discourse that have sought to define its significance for the evolution of American self-presentation. Immediately preceding this period, the Puritan experience established the frontier condition as essential to national character just as the centuries that followed became aligned to the prerogative of Manifest Destiny and the American exceptionalism associated with Jackson Turner's 'Frontier Thesis.'[56]

Through much of the second half of the twentieth century the interpretation of the Puritan relationship to the frontier was dominated by the work of intellectual historian Perry Miller's 'Errand into the Wilderness,'[57] an address given at Harvard in May of 1952. This work was instrumental in defining the founding of early New England settlements as brave and wilful acts embarked upon to set an example for all to witness. According to Donald Weber's critique of Miller's work, such terms reflect a level of twentieth-century, post-war, academic exuberance but they have also promoted an understanding that the original Puritans arrived to find their promised land largely inhospitable, and the edges of their early settlements threatening both physically and morally.[58] Readings of the early accounts of the first Puritan generation, and the Jeremiad sermons of the second, juxtapose the untamed 'wilderness' with the cultivated

[54] Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*; Nash and Miller, *Wilderness and the American Mind: Fifth Edition*.
[55] See for instance: Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*; Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States"; Biggs, "Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation"; Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea."; Elden, "Land, Terrain, Territory"; Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.
[56] Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner."
[57] Miller, "Errand into The Wilderness."
[58] Weber, "Historicizing the Errand."

'garden' and the former became a space of banishment for those dissenting voices unable to find harmony in the latter. This early social strategy, drawing upon biblical interpretations of exile, and the threat of an associated loss of morality, consolidated the seventeen-century's 'awesome caricature of that wilderness.'[59] However more recent readings of this material and reappraisals of Miller's work, have identified other prevailing themes. Most importantly authors such as sociologist Samuel D. Stabler detail an abiding anxiety related to the capacity for local and national communities to maintain a level of cohesion and coherence with the lure of a seemingly boundless landscape threatening to unravel political, social and religious ties.[60] However, for Stabler, the frontier is 'a site of creative experimentation' in this period, and one which 'helped to produce a decentralized American state structure, which in turn provided the backdrop for increased local control in religious life.'[61] For these Puritan settlers, the possibility of banishment to the 'wilderness' or the voluntary exit of dissenting voices, enabled communities to maintain a level of orthodoxy and excise opposition, but it also provided separatists with the opportunity to escape community control. More broadly, the repeated splintering of early settler groups produced a level of social and ideological heterogeneity, facilitated by the availability of the frontier.[62] Here the concern for a coherent organised community and the complimentary role of a pluralistic hinterland are established as an important precursor to the federalist and republican objectives of the early independence period.

Within such a context the eighteenth-century settlement of the Northwest Territory and the locating of the Federal City as a gateway to it, contended with similar issues. The expansion of the new union and the dissipation of its population were closely aligned to the preservation of liberty and prosperity. However, these same freedoms threatened to undermine national cohesion. The Public Land Survey then became an instrument for regularizing the physical and economic character of this frontier at the broader scale, while enabling the plurality of development required of a diverse population. Furthermore, such a form of administerial control over an area of land few had visited or experienced, and whose rights of ownership were heavily contested, represents an important shift in the terms by which authority might be expressed. The relationship

[59] Heimert, "Puritanism, the Wilderness, and the Frontier," 371.
[60] Stabler, "Church, Space, and Pluralism."
[61] Bozeman, "The Puritans' 'Errand into the Wilderness' Reconsidered."; Stabler, "Church, Space, and Pluralism"; Weber, "Historicizing the Errand," 238.
[62] Stabler, "Church, Space, and Pluralism."

between the mapping of land and its appropriation has long been established.[63] Certainly there is insightful work exploring the contradiction represented by a republic such as American being engaged in the imperial colonisation of its continental interior.[64] However within the context of the location of the Federal City and the character for the L'Enfant plan that followed, the survey alignment of the Northwest territory provides essential evidence of control over an uncertain landscape being invested with political intention.[65]

The establishment of the Land Ordinances and the Public Survey System and the regulation of a seemingly 'wild' landscape also had deeper metaphorical and political value – the transformation of space into property carrying enduring associations with the establishment of moral fortitude and civic virtue.[66] This represents a more commonly shared eighteenth-century understanding, one that had appropriated humanist ideas of 'nature' and the 'natural' and transposed them onto rapidly evolving structures of political thought in both Europe and America. American expansion and the settling of the frontier provided an unprecedented and paradigmatic manifestation of such thinking at a critical moment of widespread nation-building. This moment also coincided with a clear shift in the real and symbolic value of the 'natural' that anticipated the American romanticism of the early nineteenth century as well as political impetus behind the concept of Manifest Destiny that followed. While this relationship between the land and the citizen has been predominately linked with Jeffersonian republicanism, the importance of personal liberty, civic virtue and political morality was shared across the political spectrum, and both republicans and federalists were faced with the contradictory aims of maintaining a confederated political organisation of an ever-expanding nation.[67] The plan for the Federal City had to incorporate and represent both.

For our understanding of the ideas that may have informed the choice of location for the Permanent Seat of Government, it is then important to explore the way such a rhetoric of virtue was tied to ideas of nature and landscape, the settlement of land, and more

[63] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
[64] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."
[65] While this proceeds the first cadastre it fulfils the same objective.
[66] see Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea."
[67] Definitions of republican thought have been the subject of considerable debate but new readings of the relative inconsistencies of the key eighteenth century figures reveal plural interpretations and many shared areas of interest and endeavour. See: Gould, "Virtue, Ideology, and the American Revolution: The Legacy of the Republican Synthesis."

specifically to the establishment of an agrarian basis for commerce and prosperity. I argue that this is necessary to provide a context for the location of a Federal City that was to be both distanced from the corrupting influence of existing cities, and closely aligned to the geographic advantages that might enable it to become a commercial centre in its own right. More specifically, the debate over the location of the permanent seat of government along the banks of a river with the potential to link the territory to the Atlantic, reflects the strong intention to reorientate the new region eastward and dissolve potential alliances with other imperial interests being played out on the global stage.[68] Finally, the legal division of land that few had laid eyes upon, speaks of a wider intention to tame a disordered frontier and apply a societal structure linked to the character of its reordered landscape.

The Virtue of Landscape

The principles of liberty that underpinned the cultivation of the western frontier were contingent upon this liberty being regulated by a sense of common purpose. This was by no means guaranteed as new populations settled the new territories, however advocates for growth retained a degree of confidence in the power of a connection to the natural landscape, and its agricultural development, to promote republican virtue. The association of nature with virtue had its pragmatic roots in the benefits of land ownership, self-sufficiency and the subsequent prerogative of the yeoman farmer to preserve the collective well-being of the republic.[69] These ideas had a long legacy and had informed political thinking long before they were associated with Thomas Jefferson or the expanding American continent, however when translated into the eighteenth-century American context they have several, often contradictory, characteristics. Nature held the potential for moral good but uncultivated nature retained its status as a powerful threat to political and social order, a threat that was seen to be embodied by the unfamiliar character and aggression of Native American tribes.[70] At the same moment as the Ordinances were providing the structures to enable the transformation of the frontier from lawless ‘wilderness’ to a cultivated agrarian Arcadia, the debates over

[68] See Furstenberg, “The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History.”
[69] Andrew, *Imperial Republics: Revolution, War and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution*.
[70] Mennell, “Liminality and the Frontier Myth in the Building of the American Empire”; Onuf, “Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s.”

the location of the permanent seat of government were challenging the Potomac site as an uninhabitable backwater.[71]

The balance between the two was delicate. The potency of the open landscape lay in its ability to be ordered; however, the infinite potential of the American idea and the promise of prosperity was bound to the apparently limitless extent of the disordered land that lay beyond. Both readings of these landscapes are compatible with the complex self-definition of the new nation and international expectations for its future. For its champions, the American continent was a place of infinite possibility and natural riches - a place free from want, with land enough to avoid the political pitfalls of an enslaved labouring class. For its detractors however, the continent was vast and chaotic, its relatively sparse indigenous population a symptom of the hostility of the climate and landscape.[72]

Both readings are indicative of the important evolution of late eighteenth-century thinking with regards to nature, and both provide the necessary context for L'Enfant's plan for the Federal City. Furthermore, This thesis introduces the idea that the plan itself may be understood as embracing both the potential of the expansive but ordered perspective, and what historian J.P. Dougherty has termed 'the slovenly wilderness of a continent vaguely realizing westward' that formed its vanishing points.[73] Urban planning as we understand it now was not a developed practice at this time and both the ideal cities of the late Renaissance and configuration of new European city districts or ceremonial squares shared a formal and representational language with garden design.[74] Insofar as the Federal City was both a site for the ceremonial practice of government and speculative commercial opportunity, I argue that it conflated the tradition of the commercial land survey and the arrangements of garden and parks in a highly unusual manner.

Contemporary and historical representations of nature (both literary and pictorial) served similar purposes. The picturesque garden and the landscape painting both

[71] Benton, "The Author of the Thirty Year's View: Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," 1:150.
[72] Harvey, "The Noble Savage and the Savage Noble: Philosophy and Ethnography in the Voyages of the Baron de Lahontan"; de Buffon and Sonnini, *Histoire Naturelle, Générale et Particulière: Minnéraux*.
[73] Dougherty, "Baroque and Picturesque Motifs in L'Enfant's Design for the Federal Capital," 33.
[74] Townsend, "The Picturesque."

Fig. 2.4

Chateau de Versailles

Pierre Patel, 1668
Oil on Canvas, Musée de l'Histoire de France, Versailles

expressed a level of control over an expansive terrain.[75] Cartographic and illustrative depictions both denoted ownership and authority - whether to promote the position of their patron or to facilitate land sales or taxation.[76] This tradition had long described the parameters of property or military conquest and been bounded by a wilder territory that lay beyond (Fig.2.4). In the nineteenth century the transition between cultivated and uncultivated landscapes became identified with an idealised form of Americanness that provided homegrown examples of sublime landscapes through the work of the Hudson Valley School (Fig. 2.5, 2.6). Nature was the site of the cultivation of the self through solitude in the work of the Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Whitman, and ultimately, representations of the wild frontier consolidated the image of the American West and established the basis for what would become the National Parks program a century later - from which the current configuration of the monumental core of Washington, D.C. would emerge. Before this rich reframing of the American landscape, the inner continent and the underpopulated areas at the edges of larger state boundaries were largely undocumented and difficult to access.

The scale of frontier was described by Crèvecouer in his *Letters from an American Farmer* in 1782: 'Who can tell how far it extends?' he exclaimed, 'Who can tell the millions of men whom it will feed and contain? For no European foot has yet travelled half the extent of this mighty continent!'[77] These uncharted lands that lay beyond the settled territories along the eastern seaboard were described with less exuberance than the nineteenth century depictions of the frontier and expansive western lands, but the inaccessibility of the eighteenth century 'wilderness' fuelled a frontier mythology and the mysteriousness of these territories contributed to the theory that the continental interior might be a place of extraordinary wonder and unimagined fertility.

Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* reinforced this view and provides important insights into his view of the continent as he chose to represent it. The text is an unusual collection of lists of species, populations, measurements of rivers, rainfall and wind. The text is structured as a response to a questionnaire that François Barbé-Marbois, secretary of the French legation to the United States, sent to the governors of the

[75] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*; Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea."
[76] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
[77] Crèvecouer, *Letters from and American Farmer*, 50–51.

Fig. 2.5

View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm - The Oxbow

Thomas Cole 1836
Oil on Canvas
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig. 2.6

Indians Viewing Landscape

Thomas Cole 1840
Oil on Panel
Private Collection

thirteen states in 1780.[78] It was composed of twenty-two questions intended to assemble an understanding of the history, geography, resources and government of each state. Jefferson's text is a robust response to this request but served several additional purposes. Primarily, it provided a refutation of the critical claims of French naturalist the Comte de Buffon, the director if the *Jardin du Roi* and the author of the *Histoire Naturelle, Gènèrale et Particuliére* (1749–1804).[79] Buffon's own work was significant in connecting environmental factors to biological behaviours and species characteristics. The *Histoire* was widely read in Europe and advanced early theories of climatic adaptation that prefigured Darwin's theory of evolution but attributed the relative lack of larger quadrupeds and the sparse indigenous population of the American interior to an inhospitable continental climate - too cold and too humid.[80] This impression was the result of limited information but had profound repercussions, an inclement climate being an unlikely setting for a new political order or healthy cultural progress. Building upon this theory in the *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Deux Indes* (1772), Guillaume Thomas François Raynal went further to suggest that 'one must be astonished that America has not yet produced one good poet, one able mathematician, one man of genius in a single art or a single science.'[81] Jefferson picks up this point directly and offers the wit of Franklin and the heroic status of George Washington as counter examples, but the critique strikes at the wider presumption of the New World being the natural inheritor to European culture and the next stage in the anticipated westering progress of 'civilization.'[82] Jefferson's response is a means of recovering the perceived potential of the new nation to both secure the political and economic support of European allies, and to draw upon the understanding of the New World being a place of limitless potential.[83]

Notes on the State of Virginia delineates this national potential in geographic terms and weaves its ideological directions together with the mechanisms of physical expansion. For Hallock the book is 'the product of and blueprint for an expanding republic.'[84] This

[78] Barbé-Marbois (Barbé de Marbois), "Marbois' Queries Concerning Virginia, [before 30 November 1780]."
[79] de Buffon and Sonnini, *Histoire Naturelle, Générale et Particulière: Minnéraux*.
[80] Glacken, "Count Buffon on Cultural Changes of the Physical Environment," 19.
[81] Humphreys et al., *The Anarchiad: A New England Poem*, 72–73.
[82] Heffernan, "On Geography and Progress: Turgot's Plan d'un Ouvrage Sur La Géographie Politique (1751) and the Origins of Modern Progressive Thought"; Onuf, "Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s."
[83] Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*, 69.
[84] Hallock, "Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West."

is interspersed with passages of revery in which Jefferson describes his fear and awe crawling to the edge of the Natural Bridge and claims the point at which the Potomac River passes through the Blue Ridge mountains as 'perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in nature.'[85] It is illuminating to provide the passage in full:

> You stand on a very high point of land. On your right comes up the Shenandoah, having ranged along the foot of the mountain an hundred miles to seek a vent. On your left approaches the Patowmac, in quest of a passage also. In the moment of their junction they rush together against the mountain, rend it asunder, and pass off to the sea. The first glance of this scene hurried our senses into the opinion, that this earth has been created in time, that the mountains were formed first, that the rivers began to flow afterwards, that in this place particularly they have been dammed up by the Blue Ridge of mountains, and have formed an ocean which filled the whole valley; that continuing to rise they have at length broken over at spot, and have torn the mountain down from its summit to its base. The piles of rock on each hand, but particularly on the Shenandoah, the evident marks of their disrupture and avulsion from their beds by the most powerful agents of nature, corroborate the impression. But the distant finishing which nature has given to the picture is of a very different character. It is a true contrast to the foreground. It is as placid and delightful, as that is wild and tremendous. For the mountain being cloven asunder, she presents to your eye, through the cleft, a small catch of smooth blue horizon, at an infinite distance in the plain country, inviting you, as it were, from the riot and tumult roaring around, to pass through the breach and participate in the calm below.[86]

He goes on to suggest that this evidence of a 'war between rivers and mountains' is 'worth a voyage across the Atlantic.'[87] The passage is an essential one as it weaves together several important American tropes and projects a highly specific view of both the drama of the American landscape and characterizes the threshold of the frontier as a gateway to, not a threatening wilderness, but a tranquil valley, created not by history and human intervention but by geology. Jefferson is staking a highly astute set of claims for the continent, that have an immediate bearing on the perceived future of the nation and the layout of its capital.

The passage above exemplifies this, the exuberance of the description celebrating the passage west through the mountains. The Potomac itself is, 'in quest of a passage also.'

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[85] Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*, 21.
[86] Jefferson, 21.
[87] Jefferson, 21.

The opening up of such a passage is described as a natural event 'created in time… by the most powerful agents of nature.'[88] The topic of this passage is addressed again in Jefferson's *Rivers* section, the narrative of the text formed around the idea of cultural advancement through the cultivation of the frontier and the successful communication of new territories with the eastern seaboard and the Mississippi River.[89] The structure echoes the congressional debates over the location of the permanent seat of government discussed in the preceding chapter, and intertwines the practical and socio-political ambitions for national expansion to both the need for a reliable means of cross-continental transport and the highly specific moral and political value of taming the western frontier. Both reinforce the inherent potential of the American way of life as an antidote to the corrupted societies of Old Europe, a step towards a new order, and an advanced state of nature and society. The location of the Federal City and the extent of the L'Enfant plan are a direct reflection of each of these priorities. The city was to provide evidence of American national confidence at a scale comparable to the anticipated continental expansion. I argue that it was also structured to work allegorically as a three-dimensional manifestation of the transition between settled landscape and 'wilderness.'

Jefferson's depiction of the nation, described through the literary vehicle of the *State of Virginia* and the structure provided by Barbé-Marbois, presents the inner American continent as a place of promise. The text suggests that North America is a *tabula rasa* rather than a contested space of indigenous occupation. Certainly, Jefferson's literary treatment of Black and Native Americans has contributed significantly to evidence of his racism,[90] but this material must neither be justified or seen in isolation. The views expressed here are connected to wider assumptions of European exceptionalism associated with Locke's assertion that 'in the beginning, all the world was America.'[91] The American frontier and, by association its inhabitants were then seen to demonstrate clear stages of progress aligned to their geography. For Buffon, the object of much of the *Notes,* the American continental interior and the indigenous population represented a primordial state. He and the Abbé Raynal foresaw the settlement of the territory as futile

[88] Jefferson, 69.
[89] Jefferson, 7–18.
[90] Magnis, "Thomas Jefferson and Slavery: An Analysis of His Racist Thinking as Revealed by His Writings and Political Behavior."
[91] Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. P.29

and leading to the 'degeneracy' of imported species rather than the advancement of a new society.[92]

The counterargument provided by Jefferson builds on several contradictory assumptions, first that a structured society and culture was advancing steadily westward, and second, that the cultivated interior offered a reprieve from the commercial corruption of the Atlantic seaboard. The former argument related to both Lockean assumptions of cultural advancement and Turgot's theory of the three stages of progress - nomadic, pastoral and agricultural.[93] The latter theory is rooted in part in Rousseau's assertion of the ideal state of nature, advancement as such being a fall from grace.[94]

The eighteenth-century American translation of these ideas combined the idealisation of the 'natural state' of the frontier with the expectation of its cultivation; the agrarian landscape being an ideal basis for republican government. The essential difference is that the new settled frontier was seen to hold the potential to impact the dense settlements of the east coast, improving them reciprocally rather than enabling them to follow the pattern of European development and perceived degeneracy. In his letter to William Ludlow in 1824 Jefferson reflects on the progressive advancement from the Rockies to the Atlantic as 'equivalent to a survey, in time of the progress of man from the infancy of nation to the present day.'[95] The passage echoes both Turgot's stage theory and Crèvecouer's *Letters* (1782). Jefferson speaks of the 'march of civilization advancing from the seacoast, passing over us like a cloud of light' echoing Crèvecouer's own impressions by which, at the far reaches of the nation, 'by living in or near the woods, their actions are regulated by the wildness of the neighbourhood.'[96] However, Jefferson goes on to suggest that 'we are at this time more advanced in civilization here than the seaports were when I was a boy. And where this progress will stop no one can say.'[97] The position of the new Federal City is then a starting point along an artery to the west, and a hinge between the Old-World garden and the promise of the interior.

[92] Boehm and Schwartz, "Jefferson and the Theory of Degeneracy."
[93] Heffernan, "On Geography and Progress: Turgot's Plan d'un Ouvrage Sur La Géographie Politique (1751) and the Origins of Modern Progressive Thought."
[94] McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*; Onuf, "Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s."
[95] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to William Ludlow, 6 September 1824."
[96] Crèvecouer, *Letters from and American Farmer*, 67.
[97] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to William Ludlow, 6 September 1824."

Such advancement was a result of the extension of the middle landscape – both consistent with Leo Marx's twentieth century definition of the term[98] and with the geographic middle of the larger nation. For Marx the American imperative to transform the wilderness into a garden prefigured the subsequent industrialization of this landscape (the machine in the garden)[99] but for Crèvecouer:

> 'those who inhabit the middle settlements…the simple cultivation of the earth purifies them, but the indulgences of the government, the soft remonstrances of religion, the rank of independent freeholders, must necessarily inspire them with sentiments very little known in Europe among people of the same class. What do I say? Europe has no such class of men; the early knowledge they acquire, the early bargains they make, give them a great degree of sagacity.'[100]

Such a position reflects the priorities contained in the Ordinances and Land Survey and reinforces the presumptive association between the agrarian landscape and republican government. Such an interconnection of landscape, society, human behaviour and the structure of governance evidences the perceived impact of the configuration of land on socio-political behaviour. Thus, the constructed landscape was also able to act as an allegorical representation of society – an aspect critical to the reading of the L'Enfant plan. Jefferson's projection of the character and promise of the American landscape to a European reader through *Notes* then provides an accessible means by which the priorities of the new nation might be communicated. This text and the contemporary depictions of the frontier assert the self-conception of American identity as predicated on the successful transformation of wild nature to cultivated territory, not losing sight of the powerful associations of unstructured nature with moral integrity and a prelapsarian state of grace. The creation of political order is then presented as a question of land management and the ability for this system to mediate between established settlement and the uncultivated 'wilderness.'

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[98] Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, 228; Segal, "Leo Marx's 'Middle Landscape': A Critique, a Revision, and an Appreciation."
[99] Cannavò, "American Contradictions and Pastoral Visions." Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*.
[100] Crèvecouer, *Letters from and American Farmer*, 57.

Landscape readings

Such mediation between tamed and wild nature was informed by two areas of contemporary literature: the accounts of inner-continental expeditions, and the treatise and guides to gardens and landscape that were popularised at this time. Thomas Jefferson's library catalogue describes an extensive collection of texts devoted to American Geography, Agriculture and Gardens (Fig.2.7). In the first category John Allen identifies Daniel Coxe's *Carolana (1722)*,[101] Robert Rogers' *Concise Account of North America(1765)*,[102] Jonathan Carver's *Travels in the Interior of North America(1766-68)*,[103] and Baron Louis Armand d'Arce Lahontan's *New Voyages to North America(1703)*[104] as the primary influences on Jefferson's impressions of the continental interior.[105] Hallock notes the importance of Jedediah Morse's *American Geography* (1789),[106] John Filson's *Discovery, Settlement and present State of Kentucke* (1784) (including the adventures of Daniel Boon)[107] in addition to the writings of Crèvecouer, Buffon and Raynal.[108] These texts have much in common and between them describe a patchwork of available knowledge of the inner continent. Each text is an important precedent for Jefferson's own *Notes.* Most provide an inventory of geographical characteristics, climate, soil quality, accessible river passages and species, and are accompanied by a series of maps with greater or lesser detail. These pragmatic accounts are accompanied by extensive descriptions of the character and customs of Native Americans and interspersed with in-depth descriptions of the difficulties encountered when attempting to settle the continental interior or explore its further reaches. These texts represent a critical shift from the rhetoric of the Puritan wilderness, not only in their establishment of the fertile promise of the American continent, but in their promotion of the figure of the heroic explorer. For instance, Robert Rogers's account of Upper New York State and Quebec sat alongside his military accounts. His stories of adventure were published in London in 1765 and frame his continental

[101] Coxe, *A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spaniards Call'd Florida, and by the French La Louisiane*.
[102] Rogers, "A Concise Account of North America Containing a Description of the Several British Colonies on That Continent."
[103] Carver, *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767 and 1768*.
[104] Lahontan, Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, *Nouveaux Voyages de M. Le Baron de Lahontan Dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*.
[105] Allen, "Thomas Jefferson and the Mountain of Salt: Presidential Image of Louisiana Territory."
[106] Morse, "The American Geography, or, A View of the Present Situation of the United States of America."
[107] Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke (1784) : An Online Electronic Text Edition*.
[108] Hallock, "Notes on the State of Virginia and the Jeffersonian West."

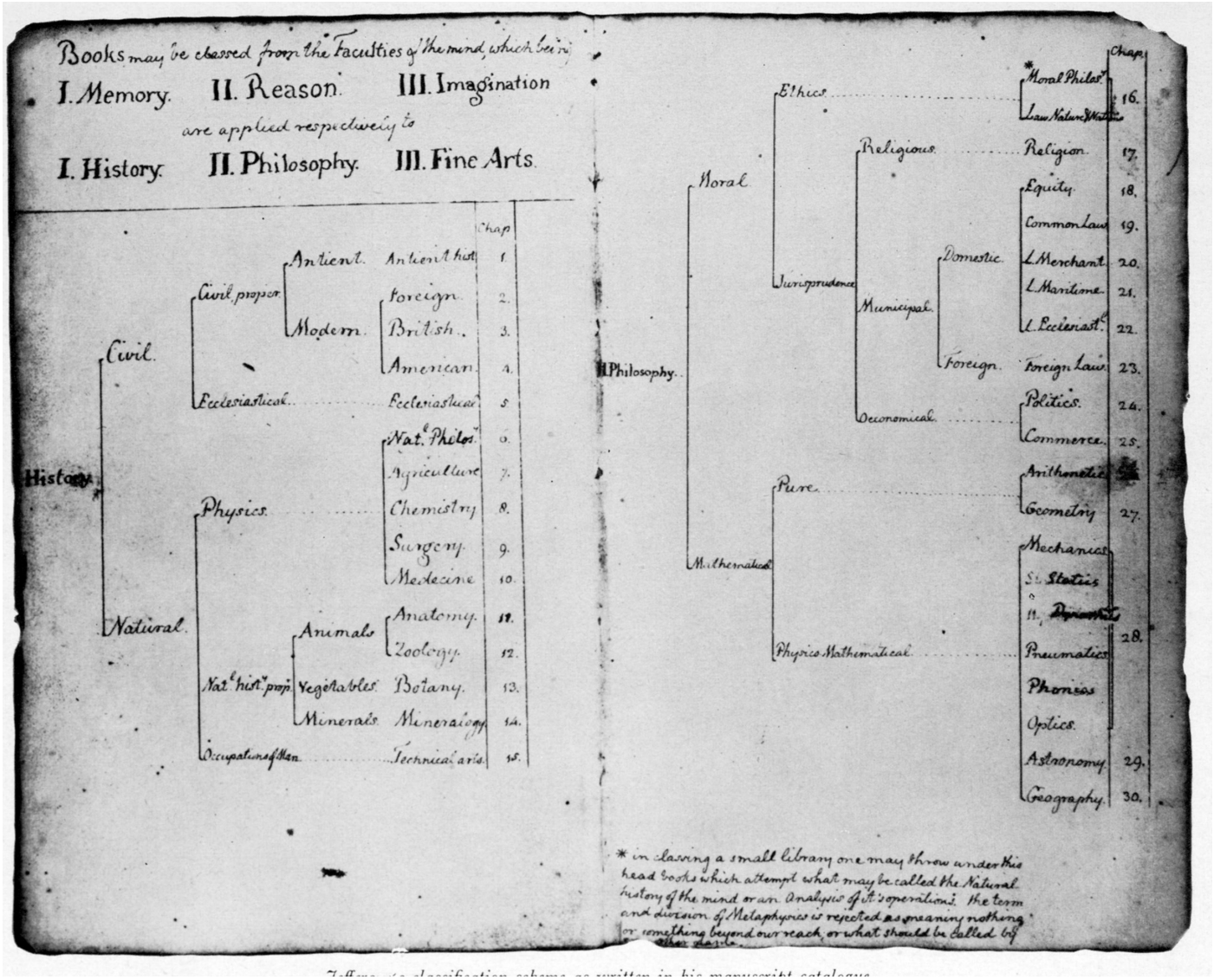

Fig. 2.7

Catalogue of the library of Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson, and E. Millicent Sowerby.
Library Of Congress, Washington, D.C.
https://www.loc.gov/item/52060000/.

expeditions as death defying adventures, orientated towards the discovery of the Northwest Passage and access to the Pacific, directed at an international readership.[109]

Carver's work, published in London in 1778 followed on from Rogers' and used a combination of geographic documentation and details of diplomatic strategies with indigenous tribes to outline a strategy for the cultivation and control of trade around the Great Lakes region. Here the moral imperative of the transformation of the interior was replaced by a combination of commercial pragmatism and early American romanticism in which the settler, the surveyor and the explorer gained mythical status through their confrontation with the adversity of the frontier, while reinforcing the promise of future prosperity. The accompanying emphasis on the description of the indigenous population further characterised the common understanding of the continental interior and its potential for settlement. Native tribes were treated in these texts as both potential adversaries and critical examples of the 'noble savage.'

Lahontan's work has been used as evidence of Enlightenment Primitivism by which the customs, beliefs and practices of Native Americans were treated as an indication of a compatibility with nature superior to that of the so-called 'civilised' world.[110] Such a position held up the apparent absence of legal, political and economic structures as a critical counterpoint to the authority of the European monarchies and the feudal order that supported them. The new American republic was structured around similar oppositions and both the texts listed above and Jefferson's own *Notes* provide a layered and often contradictory reading of the status of Native Americans. On one hand their practices represented an uncorrupted moral order, on the other, their occupation of their homelands was regarded as an obstacle to the cultivation of new territories, this agrarian development being an imperative for the proliferation of republican virtue. The contradiction also reflects conflicting ideas of time and progress. For Rousseau more generally and for Lahontan in particular, the 'natural state' of Native American tribes provided contemporary evidence of a golden age in the Classical tradition, vulnerable to the decay of civilising processes. Jefferson's own writing concurs with this interpretation but, in line with Turgot's stage theory, treats this as a departure point from

[109] This role was immortalised by Spencer Tracy in King Vidor's 1940 Northwest passage: https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2012/10/09/king-vidors-northwest-passage/. See also: Glover, "Battling the Elements: Reconstructing the Heroic in Robert Rogers."
[110] Harvey, "The Noble Savage and the Savage Noble: Philosophy and Ethnography in the Voyages of the Baron de Lahontan."

which to proceed ‘from "rude" simplicity to "civilized" complexity.’[111] For Jefferson ‘this march of civilisation’ was ‘advancing from the sea coast, passing over us like a cloud of light, increasing our knowledge and improving our condition.’[112] Historian Michael Witgen draws on this position to explore the erasure of both Native American populations as part of the development of the Northwest Territory and the concurrent annulment of the land rights of squatter settlements. Citing Locke’s principle of labour establishing the right to property, he concludes that ‘Native peoples had not established “dominion” or possession over their homelands and therefore had not entered into a social compact establishing a legitimate government and civil society.’[113] This made cultivation the basis for both ownership and social progress.

Therefore, the transition between layers of the American landscape represented a journey through time. Moving west was to be moving back through history, time being related to the transition of frontiersman to farmer, and wilderness to cultivated landscape. The literal experience of the American continent was thus interwoven with its promise as a nation and as a political idea. The implementation of the Land Ordinances lent this idea a pragmatic application, however the organisation of territory in America represented the transition from chaos to order both practically and metaphorically. The Ordinances established the structures for national expansion in an unstructured frontier, but the plan of the Federal City incorporated the same priorities by providing a symbolic configuration of space that mediated between the formal ceremonial order of the institutional city, the neighbourhood, and the ‘magnificent distances’ of the disordered nature that surrounded it.

This thesis argues that L’Enfant’s plan is therefore a reflection of this moment in both American political history and the evolution of landscape theory. The texts detailed above guided the direction of American expansion by cataloguing (and thereby othering) the physical promise of new territories and the character of their inhabitants. I argue that the treatises on gardens and landscape, available to readers in the late eighteenth century, both reinforced such prevailing attitudes and influenced the

[111] McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*.- McCoy attributes this "four stages theory" a wide range of writers, from Helvetius, Turgot, and the physiocratic disciples of Francois Quesnay in France, to Adam Ferguson, Lord Kames, John Millar, and Adam Smith in Scotland.
[112] Jefferson, “From Thomas Jefferson to William Ludlow, 6 September 1824.”
[113] Witgen, “A Nation of Settlers: The Early American Republic and the Colonization of the Northwest Territory,” 392.; See also Neem, “Developing Freedom: Thomas Jefferson, the State, and Human Capability.”

aestheticization of wild nature by creating a formal and theoretical framework for the symbolic interpretation of found and artificial landscapes. Pierre L'Enfant's plan for the Federal City is a product of both sets of ideas. In the following chapters I demonstrate how the plan combines formal planning structures with a unique orientation towards an undeveloped landscape at its edges. I argue that the combination of styles evident in the L'Enfant plan is both a function of its physical location but also a reflection of a pivotal shift between formal colonial planning - with its concerns for structured settlement and economic order - and a turn towards the pseudo-naturalism of the Picturesque.

Of the key eighteenth-century protagonists that influenced the position and plan for the Federal City, only Jefferson and L'Enfant had first-hand experience of European cities and gardens and would have registered the poignancy of such a collision of styles. Few others in America at the time would have had an informed interest in the treatise and guides that disseminated ideas of town planning as they related to the picturesque landscape. However, the L'Enfant plan, its relationship to its immediate setting and wider context, would have been legible to an international audience and positioned the city within an established city and garden tradition as well as in relation to the chronicles of frontier expeditions.

The gardening literature held in Jefferson's collection is a good indication of the material and approaches familiar to a broader interested readership. The texts were catalogued in two areas of the library, the first classified as Agriculture within a larger section of Natural History, and the second found in his Fine Art section alongside painting and sculpture. The former contains texts on husbandry and rural economics. The practical science of farming, the rotation of crops and the diversity of species align with Jefferson's interest in agricultural innovation and a will to adapt centuries of knowledge to the climate of the New World. The structure of these texts is a variation on the chronicles of western exploration and Jefferson's own *Notes,* and they are described in the library's catalogue in relation to their pragmatic value - the expertise contained within them critical to the productive transformation of uncultivated land and the organisation of existing estates. Several texts were instrumental in more specific cases such as Batty Langley's *New Principles (1728)* which informed Jefferson's approach to the gardens at Monticello, and Philip Miller's *Gardener's Directory*

which guided the laying out of Mount Vernon.[114] The majority of these texts work across a range of topics and emphases from the technical to the philosophical, and several articulate the kind of orchestrated transition between garden, park and rural landscape that is essential to our understanding the L'Enfant plan. There is an evident overlap between the more technical aspects of botany and horticulture, and theories governing the organisation of nature. The texts reflect a wider understanding of the intersection between the science of land management and more resonant ideas surrounding the symbolic significance of landscape that bring together its productive and representational aspects and provide the necessary context for understanding how L'Enfant's plan was conceived and then understood by a contemporary audience both locally and internationally. The collection situates the work in relation to the structures of national expansion as they related to the organisation of extensive physical territories, while providing the necessary discursive context for the interconnection between the practical concerns for the formal organisation of wild nature and the metaphorical power of 'wildness' as a Picturesque concept. The agricultural treatise also work within the Classical tradition of Cato's *de Agricultura*, Varro's *Rerum rustocarum libri tres*, and Columella's *De re rustica* (contained in a combined sixteenth century volume listed as No. 1 in Jefferson's catalogue) and position the priorities of ongoing commercially and politically motivated territorial growth alongside the evolution of Picturesque theory as well as the Classical ethics and moral philosophy that aligned agrarian cultivation to the principles of virtuous republican governance.[115]

There are five books held in the Gardening section of Jefferson's Fine Arts collection. They consist of Dezailler d'Argenville's *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (John James translation 1712),[116] Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770),[117] and three garden guides: Joseph Heely on the Gardens of Hagley (1775),[118] William Chambers *view of Kew Gardens* (1763),[119] and Seeley's *Description of Stowe* (1769).[120] These texts digress from the practicalities of planting and provide a discourse

[114] O'Malley, "Appropriation and Adaptation: Early Gardening Literature in America."
[115] See also Virgil Eclogues. - the *Bucolics* and the idea of the exercise of practical wisdom. Krisak and Davis, *Virgil's Eclogues*.
[116] D'Argenville, Antoine Joseph Dezaillier; James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*.
[117] Whately, "Observations on Modern Gardening."
[118] Heely, *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil, and the Leasowes*.
[119] Chambers, *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew*.
[120] Seeley et al., *Stowe: A Description of the Magnificent House and Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Grenville Temple*.

on the expressive qualities of specific gardens and their relative merit. All but d'Argenville's much earlier work are firmly rooted in a garden tradition which adopted a more naturalistic form, born out of Picturesque theory. By contrast, D'Argenville expounds on the principles of the *jardin français,* in the tradition of André LeNôtre - the structure and arrangement of *parterres,* the creation of avenues, position of sculpture and pavilions and the earthworks and hydraulics needed to support the mechanics of the garden. The book stands in abrupt contrast to the naturalism of the other guides in Jefferson's library and prevailing contemporary trends, but has a strong bearing upon any eighteenth-century reading of L'Enfant's plan for the Federal City given its formal and somewhat old-fashioned arrangement of civic space.

Perspective and the Picturesque

At first glance the L'Enfant plan appears to be a stylistic throw-back. The arrangement of monuments, avenues and cascades owe far more to d'Argenville (or LeNôtre) than to Chambers or Whately. However, the presence of this French city/garden in the New World, necessarily alters its significance and its relationship to prevailing trends in both the organisation of territories and the design of landscapes. Whereas French eighteenth-century gardens were developing in parallel to the English, their formal structures loosening at their edges to diffuse into surrounding farmland or hunting parks, the L'Enfant plan situated the skeleton of a traditional French garden, overlaid with a grid of urban plots to facilitate land sales and generate neighbourhoods, in a virtually limitless and largely unpopulated 'wild and tremendous'[121] hinterland. The plan is a collision of the principles of commercial land management, a ceremonial language borrowed from seventeenth century France, and an orientation towards the evocative power of untamed nature that was central to the Picturesque. Such stylistic ambivalence, embedded in the Plan has hitherto eluded careful analysis. This thesis establishes its critical contribution of American thinking and relates it to the rapidly shifting reading of landscape and nature that was live in Europe at the time.

The strangeness of the plan captures the unique tendency of early Americans to co-opt and hybridise conflicting ideas and harness their formal structures to build the necessary armature for new national institutions. The political aspect of this work enabled

[121] Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*.

principles of small republican government to become reconciled to federalist-leaning commercial concerns and massive territorial growth.[122] The conceptual resonance of the wilderness or frontier was subject to a similarly layered and contradictory interpretation. The political oversight of, and commercial access to, the continental interior was facilitated through the placement and organisation of the Federal City. The landscape that it was orientated towards was the source of a national revenue stream. It was also a receptacle for a national foundation mythology and a symbol of uncorrupted moral good despite being a threat to the civic order that was to perpetuate that good. Each of these roles have a physical, aesthetic or spatial counterpoint and each are incorporated into the L'Enfant plan. The logistical challenges of the Land Ordinances represent one end of the spectrum of this thinking and planning, but the contemporary debates concerning nature and naturalism, exemplified by the texts noted above, are of equal importance. They situate both the plan for the Federal City and the emergent American relationship with its landscape in the established tradition of landscape theory.

There are several trends that influenced the eighteenth-century American approach to landscape and may have informed L'Enfant's work. The available European garden precedents were interpreted from a distance and understood through the publications such as those found in the Jefferson library. Hence, the complex distillation of ideas and the array of directions that might have been available to L'Enfant were subject to a degree of removal and distortion. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson's own estates at Mount Vernon and Monticello, and *Country Seats of the United States* depicted by William Russell Birch[123] at the turn of the century offer some indication of how contemporary ideas of land management and garden design were distilled during this period. These lack the complexity of both their European contemporaries and the plan for the Federal City, but they incorporate the transitional structures between the house, the garden and the landscape beyond, that typified the turn towards to Picturesque tradition in garden planning. The interplay between the development of this tradition and the specifics of the L'Enfant plan will be discussed in detail in the following chapters but even the larger structures of the plan and its location in the Potomac valley reflect aspects of eighteenth-century landscape theory. Most

[122] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."
[123] Birch, *The Country Seats of the United States*.

prominently, the prevailing concern with the metaphorical potential of the garden (and ideal city) as a representation of the transition from chaos to order remained consistent.

The Classical origins of such a narrative, captured through the organisation of nature and the orchestration of its experience, were interpreted by Italian Renaissance and Mannerist garden designers, reformulated in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then radically reconfigured as part of the Picturesque landscape tradition in England and France in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Picturesque theory has a long and complex evolution evident in John Dixon Hunt's careful analysis of the European garden and landscape tradition and Emily Cooperman's detailed American case studies.[124] These readings help us to identify how the evocation of nature stemmed from a broader debate over the hierarchy of the arts and embodiments of beauty, and the association of such embodiments with ethical or moral good. The relationship of aesthetics to moral philosophy and land management to political order became how republican governance could be manifested spatially and develop a symbolic language free of monarchical overtones. In garden and then city design, this involved a departure from the linear perspectival landscape that had customarily placed the city or villa, both in the structure of the Renaissance garden or its representation in painting, at the centre of the image or as the focal point for the surrounding countryside.

The construction of the viewpoint was derived geometrically with increasing realism from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, at which point advanced optical techniques and the use of anamorphic projection enabled the artist, architect and set painter to confound the viewer.[125] Perspectival techniques matured to produce increasingly real and illusionistic images, but they also enabled the depiction of cities, landscapes and territories in their entirety. The birds-eye views from around 1500 (Jacopo de'Barbari's view of Venice) shifted the comprehension of the city from the experience of the citizen to the presentation of built space as a complete whole. This vantage point then facilitated the depiction of individual and national conquest, of military campaigns and extensive landscapes. The representational form brought the experience of space together with its political and territorial delineation.[126]

[124] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*.
[125] Pérez Gómez and Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*.
[126] Biggs, "Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation."

The techniques for the measurement and designation of land had been developed in parallel with the devices that constructed these views, as optical devices grew more advanced. The theodolite was introduced in the sixteenth century, but triangulation was not widespread in surveying practices until the seventeenth. Jacques and César Cassini triangulated France between 1733 and 1740,[127] Great Britain was triangulated in 1784,[128] a year before the introduction of the Public Land Survey System under the Ordinances, and the survey of India that would name and measure Mount Everest was commenced in 1801.[129] The regulation of survey systems and its professionalisation introduced a form of spatial abstraction simultaneous to the rise of the nation state and the acceleration of colonial conquest. The ability to map with accuracy, bureaucratised spatial knowledge to comprehend and administer often remote landscapes. It also made maps and city plans widely available for purchase by the general public who then subsidised their production which as Biggs has noted, 'reflected a degree of symbiosis between the state and an emerging public sphere.'[130] Cartography enabled the introduction of infrastructure, the implementation of taxes and the management of indigenous peoples, soldiers and settlers. The map removed the ambiguity of space and its relationship to a centre of power. In this respect it democratised the spaces it defined, transforming domain to territory and rationalising its governance.

The use of this perspectival overview facilitated the broad plans for eighteenth-century national expansion both in Europe and America, but within the fine arts and garden design, the form was being eclipsed by pictorial framings of idealised 'natural' landscapes. The transition was radical and subject to considerable debate. Landscape emerged as a subject for painting in the seventeenth century and the pictorial order had become a defining device for the design of gardens by the mid-eighteenth century. The move from the formal to the informal configuration of gardens, and eventually cities, coincided with multiple rifts with traditional culture. The idea of the nation state was formed over this period, colonial conquest was proceeding at pace, triangulated land surveying became common place, and the Grand Tour established travel as essential to

[127] Biggs.
[128] Wilkes, "William Roy's Plan for Great Britain."
[129] Raman and Balakrishnan, "The Spark That Fired the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India: The Triangulation Survey Made between Fort St. George (13°08'N) and Mangalore (12°91'N) by William Lambton in the Early 1800s."
[130] Biggs, "Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation," 384. See also David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 252–55.

personal cultivation. Land and the experience of it were placed at the forefront of Enlightenment thought. The primary contributors to debates at this time reframed the representational forms by which ideas might be embodied, beauty might be defined, and experience captured. Dixon Hunt's considerable work on the picturesque draws on Locke's 'association of ideas' and the primacy of individual experience as a critical underpinning to the ability for nature to be expressive in the absence of formal structures, or allegorical objects.[131] Dabney Townsend argues that this liberation from the structures of ideal forms stemmed not from a love of nature but out of the long debate over the relationship between poetry and painting, and their relative capacity to capture beauty. For Townsend, the 'ability to find those same symbols in nature shifts the classical language to a more natural, associationist and expressive presentation.'[132]

The close association of nature with poetry introduced a narrative component and a temporal element.[133] The passage of time was explicated through the introduction of images or objects of decay and ruination which were a consistent motif in landscape painting and later in the picturesque gardens themselves. In England the picturesque acquired a set of rules and objectives, explained in detail in the guides and treatise held in the Jefferson library. The modulation of view and experience, elements of surprise and delight were carefully detailed by Whately and Chambers. These were largely structured through the pictorial view rather than the constructed plan, thereby aligning developments in landscape painting and their re-creation through the artifice of the landscape gardener. In France, the picturesque tradition exhibited important differences. In the late seventeenth century, Marly-le-Roi exemplified the French conflation of the regular and 'natural' plan with both the structured, symmetrical terraces and *parterres* as well as wandering paths into the park beyond (Fig.2.8). The interweaving of formal and informal garden devices was more strategically orchestrated than their English counterparts which used the picture plane itself to define garden form, however both emphasised the placement of objects of delight and surprise – often the discovery of an unusual geological formation, extraordinary construction or ruin. In this respect, the viewer or visitor was guided through a series of experiences - an emotive theatre or journey through time.

[131] Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century*.
[132] Townsend, "The Picturesque." p 366
[133] This is best exemplified by the work of Alexander Pope (1688-1744), both a poet and a critical voice in defining the criteria for the design of gardens and the effect of their experience.

Fig. 2.8

General View of Chateau de Marly, seen from the watering pool
1724
Pierre-Denis Martin (1663-1742)
Oil paint, Palace of Versailles

The substance of the American landscape was both more extraordinary in its expansiveness and more prosaic in its character. There were no ruins to punctuate its experience or mediate its scale. The temporal element of the picturesque then became manifested through degrees of cultivation, stages of settlement and great geological contrast such as the ones described by Jefferson in his *Notes.* The ambiguous status of the disordered landscape further complicated its depiction in painting as well as its framing within the L'Enfant plan. Nature evoked post-revolutionary freedoms in both France and America but its cultivation and a societal detachment from the 'wilderness' were associated with progress. Cooperman and Dixon Hunt's recent work, *The American Translation of the Picturesque,*[134] provides an essential link between its manifestation and the prerogative of control over the frontier. They describe the American picturesque as a 'cluster of intellectual strategies: a way of comprehending landscape, experiencing it, and, of course, using and shaping it.'[135] Within this context, the structured foreground and the cultivated rural middle-ground of the American garden or landscape painting are set within a limitless landscape unlike anything available in Europe at the time. The complete incorporation of these layers represented a journey through time. The use of such layers of landscape from garden - to farm - to frontier enabled the garden plan, and L'Enfant's use of this tradition, to embody a completely new idea of American dominion.

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The American picturesque landscape thus celebrated expanse and bounty while demonstrating an ability to control nature that was the basis of civic morality. The ordering of the landscape was representative of an order of government that was both monumental and centralised, and expansive and atomised. The land ordinances secured this dual order at the scale of the territory and provided the legal armature for the promotion of a cultivated rural landscape. Pierre L'Enfant's plan for the Federal City served a similar purpose by providing the nation's founders with a survey and land distribution for the sale of lots. The plan's web of avenues radiating out towards this wider landscape, and the position of the city at the gateway of a potential trade route

[134] Cooperman and Hunt, "The American Translation of the Picturesque."
[135] Cooperman and Hunt, 16.

west, made it a hinge between the Atlantic and the interior. The latter made the plan for the new city and its dissemination to an international audience instrumental in the creation of a spatial and iconographic language of American national potential. In this respect the Federal City plan was one of the first spatial manifestations of American progress beyond its claims on the continental interior.

The principles that were evident in the plan, however, were unusually contradictory. The practical organisation of the District and its location at a new riverine gateway to the western (republican) frontier was grafted onto to a French eighteenth-century landscape plan containing heroic spaces better suited to the commemoration of kingship. This peculiar collision of formal languages and territorial objectives can be viewed as an accident of L'Enfant's amateurism, but it is an unusually suitable reflection of post-Revolutionary America's contradictory relationship with its own expansive promise. The more detailed articulation of this relationship is explored in the next chapter through an analysis of the primary order of the plan and its representational emphasis on the office of the president, and George Washington as heroic figure of virtue.

Chapter 3: L'Enfant's Washington

On 16 July 1790, the Residence Act was signed into law.[1] The Act called for the designation of a federal district of no more than ten square miles on the banks of the Potomac River to become the permanent seat of American government. The level of debate and acrimony surrounding the location made the development of the plan and the settlement of the territory a matter of urgency. Furthermore, the fragile nature of the new union made the consolidation of a symbolic centre a critical component of national stability. The Act detailed the terms of a rapid delivery so that Congress and the ancillary offices of government might be rehoused in the city within the coming decade however, there was no guidance as to its scale within the territory or a particular direction for its planning. The mechanism of the plan's delivery was left to three appointed Commissioners, Daniel Carroll, Thomas Johnson, the first elected governor of Maryland and David Stuart, a relative of George Washington's by marriage, who were instructed to guide the purchase of the land and construction of the 'buildings for Congress, the President's House and public offices by the first Monday in December 1800.'[2]

Responsibility for the design of the city and the layout of critical public buildings was placed in the hands of Pierre L'Enfant. He received brief but direct instructions from both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson as to the areas to be surveyed and

[1] U.S. Laws & Statutes, *An Act to Establish the Seat of Government of the United States...September the 22d*.
[2] U.S. Laws & Statutes.

incorporated within the plan,[3] but the distribution of buildings and the arrangement of avenues that came to typify the city were left to his individual judgement.[4] The extent of L'Enfant's independence is remarkable given the scope and importance of the project however, I argue that Washington and Jefferson's reticence was a matter of careful diplomacy - the symbolic power of the plan kept at a safe distance from the explicit direction of the two political figures. The careful containment of Washington and Jefferson's influence maintained a necessary degree of political neutrality as work progressed - the grandeur and geometric exuberance of the plan attributed to the eccentricities of its architect rather than the political ambitions of its leaders.

The parcelling of responsibility was necessary for such a vast endeavour. The importance of the plan was substantial as it was the first significant attempt to structure the idea of the new republic three-dimensionally; to articulate its sources of power, union and stability, and to anticipate the future growth of the nation. Washington, D.C. is also one of the few places where the transition between the intellectual culture of the European late Enlightenment and the idea of American democracy is made visible. This chapter examines the cultural background to the original layout of the city, and the roles of George Washington and Pierre L'Enfant in its conception and execution. This work reveals the hitherto overlooked importance of the figure of the President in the organisation of the capital, and the relevance of the overt celebration of George Washington to evolving eighteenth century ideas regarding the structure of federal power and governance.

Pierre L'Enfant

The choice of Pierre L'Enfant as the architect of the Federal City was symptomatic of the cultural environment of the early post-revolutionary period. He had energy and willing but very limited experience. According to French ambassador Jean Jules Jusserand (1855-1932),

> 'Whenever, during the war or after, something on any way connected with art was wanted, L'Enfant was, as a matter of course, appealed to, whether the question was

[3] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*; L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."
[4] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.

> of a portrait, of a banqueting hall, of a marble palace, a jewel, a solemn procession, a fortress to be raised, or a city to be planned. A man of many accomplishments, with an overflow of ideas and few competitors, he was the factotum of the new nation.'[5]

The detail of L'Enfant life prior to his appointment is limited. The accounts of Jusserand[6] and historian Paul H Caemmerer (1884-1962),[7] describe his origins. He was born in Paris in August 1754 and grew up in the apartments to the Gobelins Manufactury. His father was a painter and academician employed by King Louis XV at the Gobelins and commissioned to decorate the Hôtel de la Guerre at Versailles (1758-66). Pierre L'Enfant enrolled at the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* in 1771 and is believed to have studied under his father there. He joined a French effort to supply revolutionary America troops in 1777 and distinguished himself as an able portrait artist through the winter at Valley Forge serving under George Washington. The record of his work over the following decade is dominated by his military service, with some mention of his drawings of fortifications and diagrams of the structure of a standing Army completed for Baron von Steuben. Other notable work over this period includes the design of the insignia for the Order of the Cincinnati (Fig. 3.1), a society of Revolutionary officers, the design of temporary hall in New York for a fête in honour of the birth of the Dauphin, and a pageant in support of the ratification of the constitution (1788) (Fig 3.2).[8] None of this work extended beyond the decorative elements or festive set pieces, however in the later part of the 1780's he completed several private houses and received extensive praise for his redesign of Federal Hall in New York (1788), the site of President Washington's inauguration (Fig 3.3). L'Enfant commenced work on the Federal City plan in the Spring of 1791 but was removed from the project less than a year later following prolonged confrontation with Commissioners Carroll, Johnson and Stuart, and local landowners. The plan that emerged over this short period, was exceptionally ambitious and established the framework for the city we see today.

There have been numerous readings of the symbolic significance of the network of avenues and the placement of institutions in L'Enfant's work but there is little conclusive archival evidence to support any narrow interpretation. Only two original

[5] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 4.
[6] Jusserand, *With Americans of Past and Present Days*; Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*.
[7] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[8] The design for this is the first to reveal the expansive nature of L'Enfant's vision as the ratification banquet housed ten radiating tables, each 440 feet long.

Fig. 3.1

Badge of the Cincinnati Medal

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
c.1783, gold
Metropolitan Museum of Art

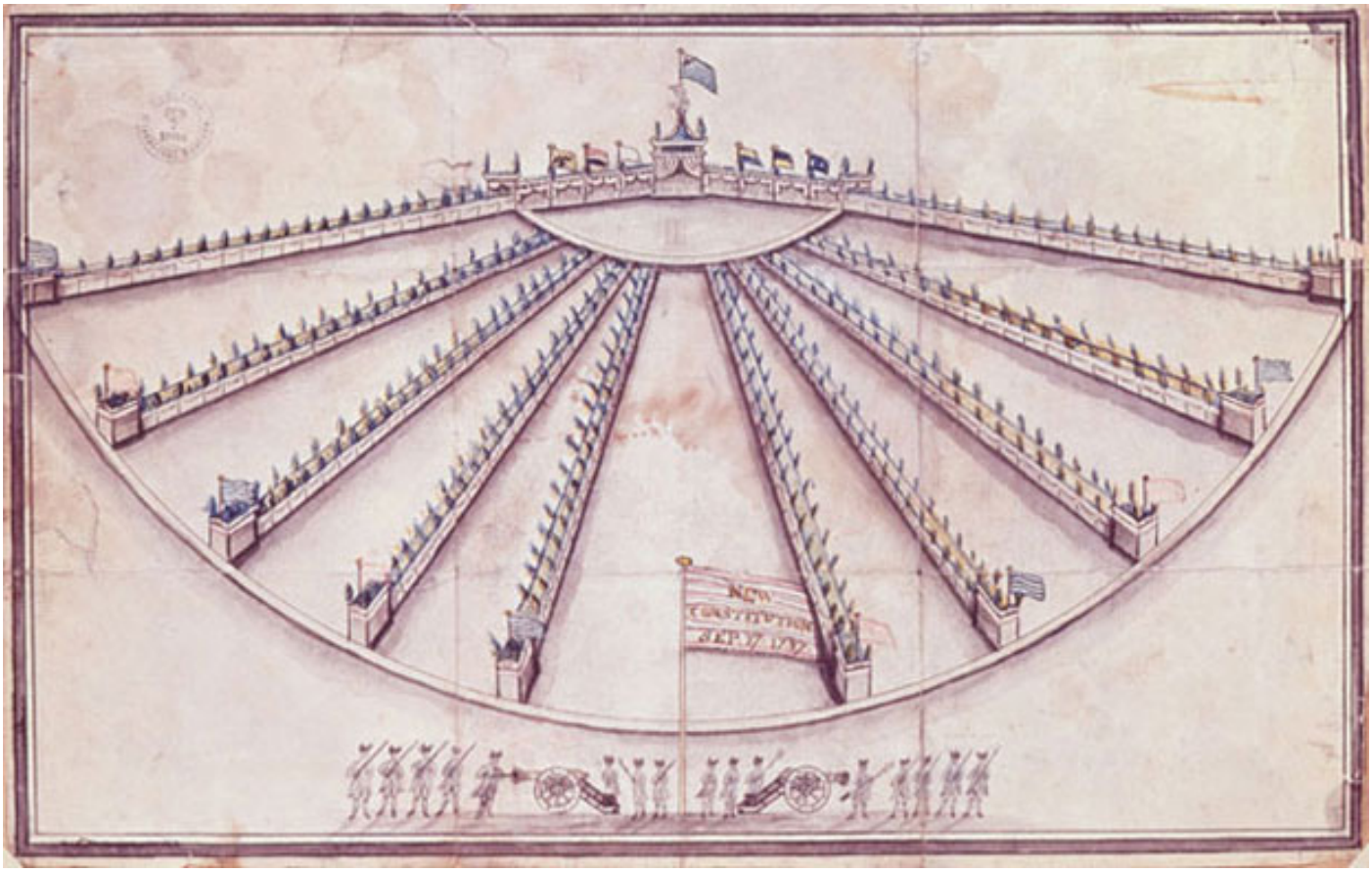

Fig. 3.2

Federal Banquet Pavilion in 1788, New York City

David Grim (1737–1826)
after 1788, Watercolour, graphite, and black ink on paper

Fig. 3.3

A view of the Federal Hall of the City of New York, as appeared in the year 1797

George Holland
1797, lithograph
Library of Congress
https://lccn.loc.gov/91481734

drawings remain, the 'Dotted Line' plan (Fig.0.3)[9] and the full plan produced for review in the summer of 1791 (Fig.0.1).[10] The contested sequence of these archived drawings is detailed in the following chapter. Documentary evidence of the debate over the direction of the plan is limited; L'Enfant's preparatory work, sketches and notes were destroyed before his death and George Washington's own diary entries for the critical period after July 1791 are missing from the record. Commissioner David Stuart expressed various reservations as to the scale and grandeur of the plan[11] and Thomas Jefferson produced his own early, and much humbler sketch for the city.[12] But, Washington's correspondence and notes on the plan are not ideologically or aesthetically driven and there are only fleeting examples of a response to L'Enfant's ideas. There is also a notable absence of direct commentary from any of the key figures on the iconographic language that L'Enfant employed or its possible implications.

The drawings and L'Enfant's notes reveal a number of areas of emphasis, but it is the dominance of Congress House (the Capitol), the avenues radiating from it, and the complex network of public spaces and State squares, that have been prioritised in the literature.[13] This has reinforced the idea of the capital city as an embodiment of balanced representational democracy.[14] L'Enfant's plan supports this interpretation in part, but I argue that the primary orientation and setting-out points for the complex matrix are determined as much, if not more, by representations of the President – his 'palace' and monument being central to the geometry of the plan.

The plan reflects an intricate power balance between competing ideologies within the city itself and the wider republic, as well as the broader issues of national unity, and the evolving definition of the role of the President which underlay it. Here the influence of George Washington over the scope and direction of the city plan, and the degree of his involvement in the procurement and construction processes, can be analysed in lieu of evidence of his hand in the construction of a political order embodied by the new seat of government. A close reading of the available documentation establishes Washington's relative reticence, but it also reinforces his iconographic importance to the eventual

[9] L'Enfant, "Dotted Line Map of Washington, D.C., 1791, before Aug. 19th."
[10] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[11] Stuart, "To George Washington from David Stuart, 26 February 1792."
[12] Washington, "Proclamation of Federal District with Map."
[13] Peterson, "The Mall, the McMillan Plan, and the Origins of American City Planning."
[14] Berg, *Grand Avenues: The Story of Charles Pierre L'Enfant*.

outcome. The location of primary nodes, the orientation of avenues connecting these sites, and the organisation of the landscape beyond - as read through L'Enfant's plan and his correspondence - reveal a degree of reverence not only for the unifying figure of the President, but also for the personal dynamism of George Washington, the man.

The celebration of such a central authority was influenced by L'Enfant's upbringing and the project reflects the intellectual culture of the late French Enlightenment. Nonetheless, there is an important distinction to be made between the monarchical tradition as manifested in France and the emotive importance of George Washington - depicted as war hero, reluctant leader and virtuous first citizen. These personal, paradigmatic qualities provided a template for the representation of just governance, which was a critical focus for the symbolism of the Federal City. An enquiry which takes these qualities into account can identify the uniquely representative character of the L'Enfant plan - a scheme that detailed a settlement established in a new territory, to house a new government - structured around the celebration of a leader, in a political climate that abhorred images of sovereign authority.

Orchestration of the City for the Celebration of the King

Pierre L'Enfant's first point of reference was the French Court, and despite being inappropriate for the representation of post-Revolutionary authority, the influence of an absolutist paradigm is apparent in the plan's primary order and its formal organisation of ceremonial life and institutional structures. Public celebration in late eighteenth-century America took the form of popular festivals and parades,[15] but L'Enfant's notes on the 1791 plan, and his report to George Washington, make no mention of popular activity.[16] His distribution of public squares and ceremonial spaces, describe a more permanent and monumental celebration of nationhood.

L'Enfant would have witnessed the expansion of Paris in the second half of the seventeenth century and had a plausible awareness of the political theatre of the court of Louis XV at Versailles. The young L'Enfant may also have had direct experience of the

[15] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820.*
[16] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."

ritual inhabitation of the palace, its grounds and surrounding town given his father's extensive work on the Hôtel de la Guerre. Certainly, LeNôtre and Blondel's structuring of the palace, town and gardens have been cited as the primary influence on his plan for Washington.[17] In addition to this: L'Enfant would have been aware of the 1748 competition for the Place Louis XV, through Pierre Patte's subsequent amalgamation and publication of the proposals into a plan for Paris, structured around royal monuments and their settings.[18] Evelyn's 1666 plan for London with its radiating streets has also been cited as a likely source[19] and Rome was an enduring precedent. L'Enfant is known to have obtained plans of 'Frankfort on the Mayne, Carlsruhe, Amsterdam Strasburg, Paris, Orleans, Bordeaux, Lyons, Montpelier, Marseilles, Turin and Milan'[20] from Thomas Jefferson. Most of these cities had undergone significant expansion and reflected an increasingly comprehensive understanding of the city as a singular metabolism.

Many of the cities noted in L'Enfant's correspondence also contained substantial commercial ports.[21] Several of the French examples were sites of recently constructed or planned *Places Royales* that were to reinforce Louis XV's authority in areas remote from Paris and Versailles.[22] Certainly most of the frequently cited examples of such *Places* employ a network of radiating avenues to control a series of relationships across an extended landscape. Such influences are extensive and complex, and they have provoked intriguing comparisons and exhaustive analyses of their relative qualities.[23] It is also important to remember that, although L'Enfant may have drawn on these examples, he did not construct the Federal City plan as an amalgam of European palaces or cities. The opportunity for creating a city within what was then regarded as the relative wilderness of the Potomac valley, which was to embody the political new beginning of the American government, had no direct built precedent. Rather it is likely

[17]Longstreth, *Mall Washingt.*; Gutheim and Lee, "Worthy of the Nation: Washington, DC, from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission." Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[18] McClellan, "The Life and Death of a Royal Monument."
[19] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[20] Reps, *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center*; Jefferson, "XII. Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 10 April 1791."
[21] L'Enfant requested : 'Ever map may fall within your reach, of any of the differents grand city now Existing such as for Example, as London, madry, paris, Amsterdam, naples, venice, genoa, florence together with particular maps of any such sea ports or dock yards and arsenals as you may know to be the most compleat in thier Improvement.' L'Enfant, "X. Pierre Charles L'Enfant to Thomas Jefferson, 4 April 1791."
[22] Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City"; Konvitz, "Grandeur in French City Planning under Louis XIV Rochefort and Marseille."
[23] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.

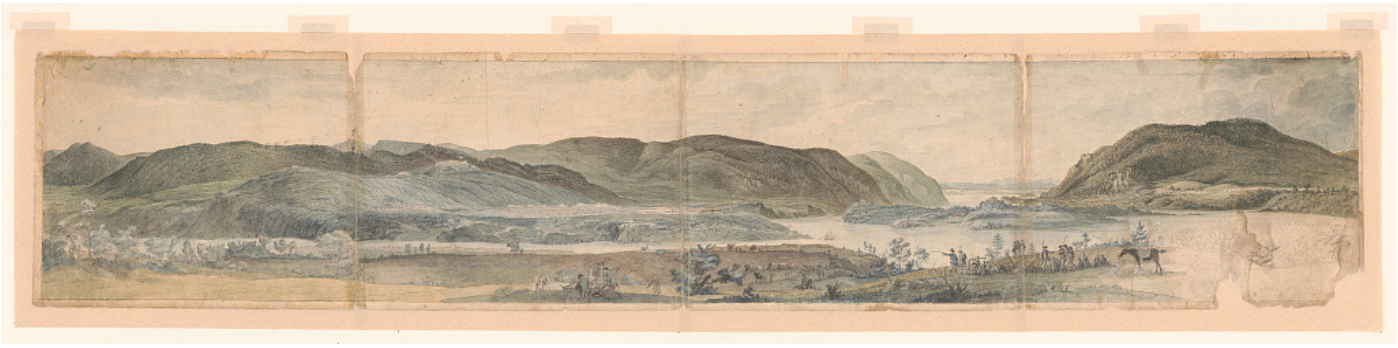

Fig. 3.4

Panoramic View of West Point

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
August 1782, watercolor,
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

that L'Enfant was drawing on a broader eighteenth-century culture of representation, filtered through his training as a landscape painter (Fig.3.4), which used the control of the natural topography through geometry to articulate ideas of governance. According to this tradition, and outlined in the preceding chapter, the structuring of the wilderness signified an essential rationalisation of moral chaos.[24] In the case of the 1791 plan, the primary order was generated by an orientation to the topography and the surrounding landscape, and unified by the figure of the President.

In the absence of his papers it is impossible to speak conclusively about L'Enfant's working method or peripheral preoccupations.[25] When studying his plan for the Federal City, we are looking at the work of a relative amateur, grounded in the intellectual culture of eighteenth-century France, and working at a time in American history when large areas of the continental interior were being surveyed and organised both physically and politically through the Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787. The debates over the Ordinances acknowledged a direct relationship between the configuration of settlements and the propagation of a system of governance, but discussions regarding the capital did not. The Jefferson and the Commissioners' letters reveal anxieties over the grandiose scale and configuration of L'Enfant's work, but there is little evidence of a political idea that was associated with the plan. All we have is the fragile original drawing, its facsimiles and the detailed description of L'Enfant's intentions contained in his reports to George Washington.[26] These offer a tantalising impression of this unprecedented project, but not the full picture of a refined piece of work with a built counterpoint. In the absence of more detailed material, it is helpful to reflect upon the relationship of the plan to the principles of landscape painting that were familiar to L'Enfant, the surveying and cartographic techniques that were commonplace at the time, and the significance they held for an eighteenth-century audience.

We know that Pierre L'Enfant had trained as a landscape painter at the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture,* reputedly under the supervision of his father who, as

[24] Cannavò, "American Contradictions and Pastoral Visions"; Dougherty, "Baroque and Picturesque Motifs in L'Enfant's Design for the Federal Capital"; Cosgrove, "Reviewed Work(s): Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World by Kenneth Olwig"; Heffernan, "On Geography and Progress: Turgot's Plan d'un Ouvrage Sur La Géographie Politique (1751) and the Origins of Modern Progressive Thought"; Glacken, "Count Buffon on Cultural Changes of the Physical Environment."
[25] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[26] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."

a court painter and Academician, was responsible for several battle panoramas held in the collection at Versailles.[27] Certainly, the tradition of landscape painting and its evolving interpretations of nature offer useful insight into L'Enfant's intentions, in particular two obvious emphases of his plan, the structuring of a natural landscape through the control of the long view oriented to the existing topography, and the positioning of key spaces and edifices to anchor these vistas. In Elbert Peets' terms, 'L'Enfant, I fancy, worked on horseback, liked to use his compass, and liked to get the bearing of long shots.'[28] Such an enhancement of the expansive quality of the available landscape has been interpreted as an orientation to the frontier in anticipation of national expansion, and what would become the principle of Manifest Destiny.[29] Viewpoints were not chosen at random. In the first instance, specific vantage points were identified by George Washington in March 1791 and described in detail in L'Enfant's June memoranda and correspondence.[30] Secondly, a close analysis of the plan reveals a precise orientation to specific locations in the surrounding landscape and a structured relationship to the surveyed boundary points of the District.

The location of the District boundary was established by the President so that the southern tip would incorporate the existing port at Alexandria. The boundary was then set from this southern position in March 1791 (Fig.3.5) - this first boundary stone being dedicated on 15 April 1791.[31] The continuation of the boundary survey and the laying-out of the remaining stones continued through the duration of this year and the next, Andrew Ellicott's Report of 1 January 1793 confirming its completion.[32] The first mention of Pierre L'Enfant's appointment was made in January 1791, and at the beginning of March of that year, George Washington wrote to local landowners detailing the scope of L'Enfant's survey:

> 'as may aid in fixing the site of the Federal town and buildings: his present instructions express those which are within the Eastern branch, the Potomac and the

[27] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[28] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 30.
[29] Sonne, "The Capital City as a Microcosm of the State: The Case of Washington." p. 82.
[30] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."
[31] National Capital Planning Commission, "Boundary Markers of the Nation's Capital: A Proposal for Their Preservation & Protection."
[32] National Capital Planning Commission. Andrew Ellicott had been appointed to survey the District Boundary. His survey work continued after Pierre L'Enfant's dismissal to complete the plan provide a suitable engraving for land sales.

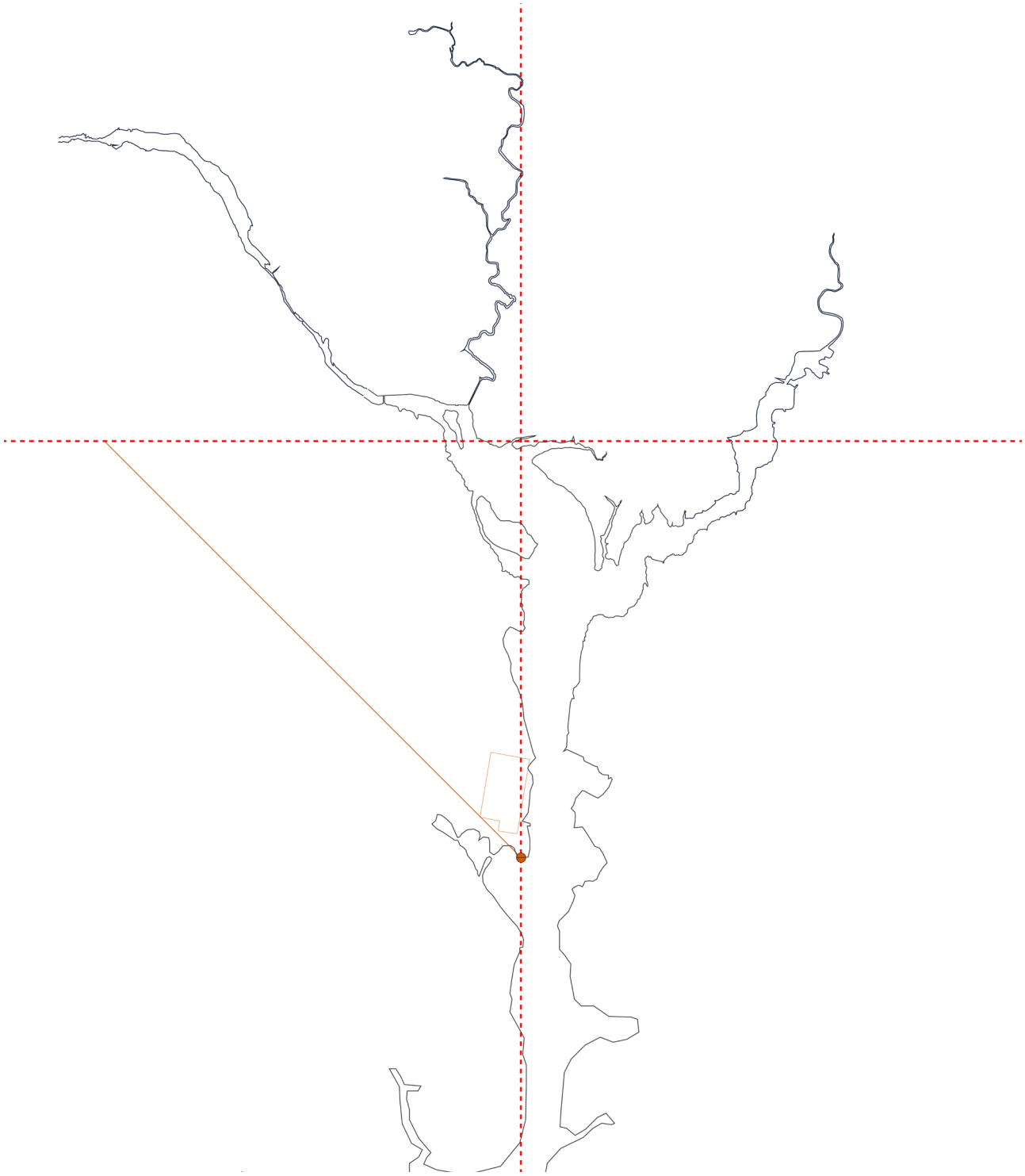

Fig. 3.5

Foundation point of District Boundary

Including the majority of the town of Alexandria to the South

(Author)

> Tyber and the road leading from Georgetown to the ferry on the Eastern branch. He is directed to begin at the lower end and work upwards, and *nothing further* is communicated to him…'[33]

Thomas Jefferson rearticulated such instructions directly to L'Enfant in March 1791. In this later correspondence, Jefferson asks L'Enfant to 'begin on the Eastern Branch and proceed from thence upwards…connecting the whole with certain fixed points on the map Mr. Ellicott is preparing.'[34] This documentation demonstrates three critical aspects of L'Enfant's appointment, firstly that he was limited geographically to a small region within the wider federal territory, secondly that he was expected to survey and advise on the location of public buildings rather than provide a design for a town, and thirdly, that his work was being conducted concurrently to Ellicott's boundary survey and may not have been accurately correlated to it.

George Washington's papers suggest that the sequence of the survey, and the appointment of L'Enfant, was intended to encourage rapid land sales and the release of property held by existing proprietors such as 'the obstinate Mr Burns' who owned over two hundred acres along what is now Pennsylvania Avenue and allay the 'fears & jealousies' of others who 'were counteracting the public purposes.'[35] These practical concerns for the timely ceding of land to the public, and the allocation of saleable plots to support the foundation of the city, dominated communications between Washington, Jefferson and the city's three Commissioners throughout 1791.[36] There is little suggestion of a wider ambition for the distribution of government buildings or the configuration of public space other than what related to the careful allocation of compensation and land rights; indeed, there is no evidence before late March 1791 that L'Enfant's instructions extended to planning their location.

According to his letter to Thomas Jefferson of 11 March 1791 and his report to George Washington of 26 March, L'Enfant spent the first month of his appointment surveying the District and his progress was dogged by 'the badness of the weather.'[37] There are no remaining drawings or sketches of his initial survey or early ideas. Evidence of the rapid

[33] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 33.
[34] Kite, 35.
[35] Washington, "to Thomas Jefferson, 31 March 1791."
[36] Washington, "From George Washington to the Commissioners for the Federal District, 24 July 1791."
[37] L'Enfant, "III. Pierre Charles L'Enfant to Thomas Jefferson, 11 March 1791."

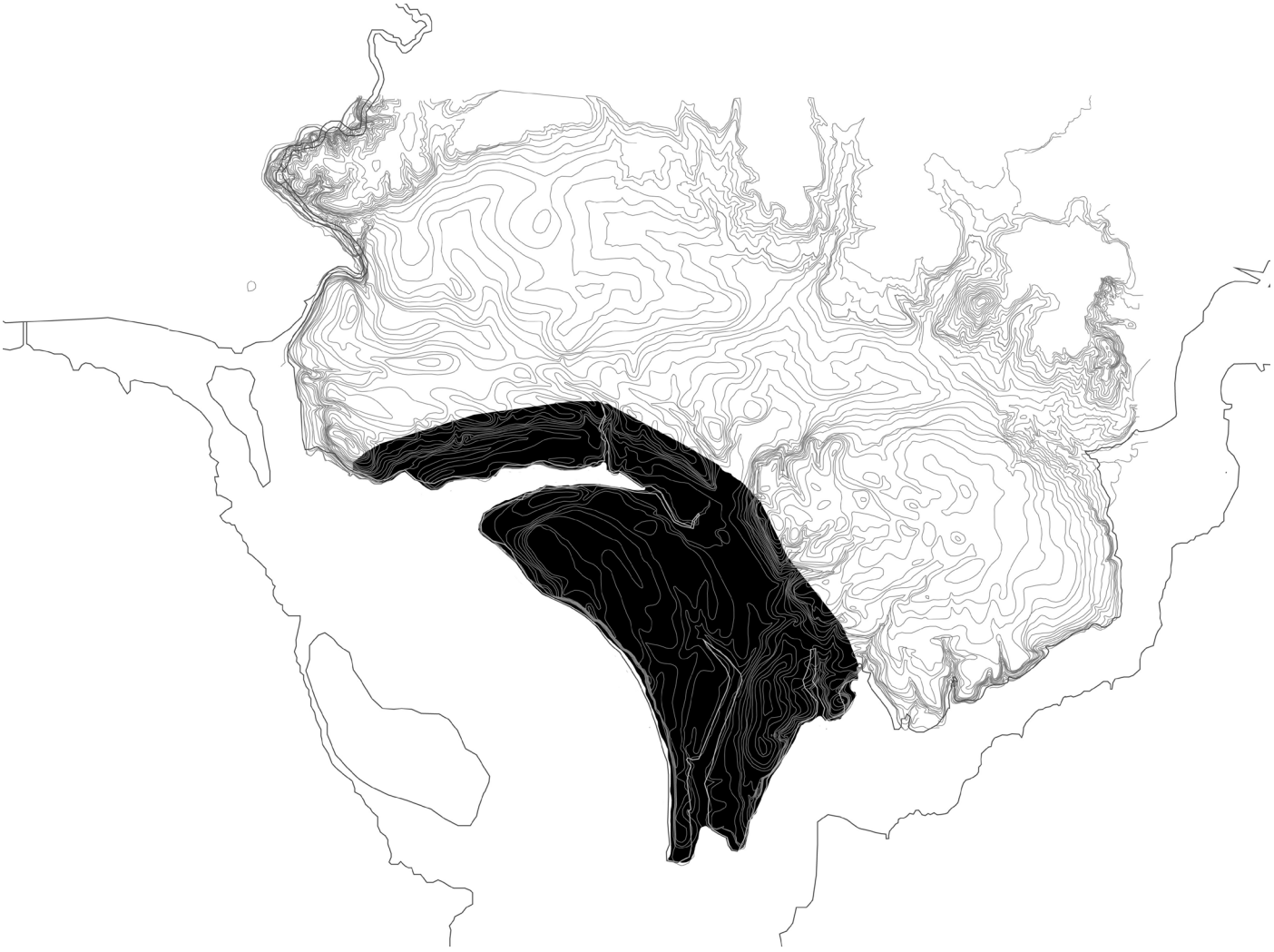

Fig. 3.6

Scope of initial L'Enfant survey

This follows the line of the topography to suggest that the first vision for the Federal City was a plan contained within the river basin and overlooked from the higher land above.

(Author)

evolution of the plan is limited to what appears to be a setting-out drawing, the 'Dotted Line' plan, the full plan and the six items of correspondence sent to either Jefferson or Washington before the end of August 1791. The description contained within the first report (11 March 1791)[38] identifies two possible sites and strategies for the location of the new city: one along the Eastern Branch (what is now the Anacostia River); the other in its current location between Goose and Rock Creeks, closer to the existing port at George Town.

It is apparent that George Washington and the commissioners used the choice between the two sites as a negotiating tool for the release of land from the competing interests at Carrollsburg and George Town. For L'Enfant, however, they represented two radically different visions for the city. The first was located on the lower, level ground of what is now the Mall (Fig 3.6). This could be overlooked from the ridge to the north and 'present[ed] a situation most advantageous to run streets and prolong them on grand and far distant point of view.'[39] The overview from the higher ground allowed the space below to be understood as a singular legible whole, similar to depictions of the grounds of Versailles by Pierre Patel in 1668 (Fig.2.5), or Pierre-Denis Martin in 1722 (Fig.3.7), and keyed to a perspectival organisation. The site above this plain was dismissed in this first report – L'Enfant noting that 'no part of the ground between the Eastern branch and Georgetown can be say to be of a commanding nature' and that 'the part of the ground toward Georgetown is more broken.'[40]

L'Enfant appears to have mistaken George Washington's strategic support of the site along the Eastern branch as a specific instruction, and that the President's subterfuge had confused and misled his architect. The risk of miscommunication and L'Enfant's advocacy for the Eastern Branch location is highlighted in Washington's short letter to Jefferson on 16 March 1791 in which he asks Jefferson to recommend a means for 'declaring at *once* the site of the public buildings, [and] prevent some inconvenience which I see may arise from the opinions promulgated by Mr. L'Enfont [sic].'[41] Jefferson wrote directly to L'Enfant the following day to remind him that 'it is the desire that the public mind should be in equilibrio between these two places till the President arrives,

[38] L'Enfant.
[39] L'Enfant.
[40] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 37.
[41] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784."

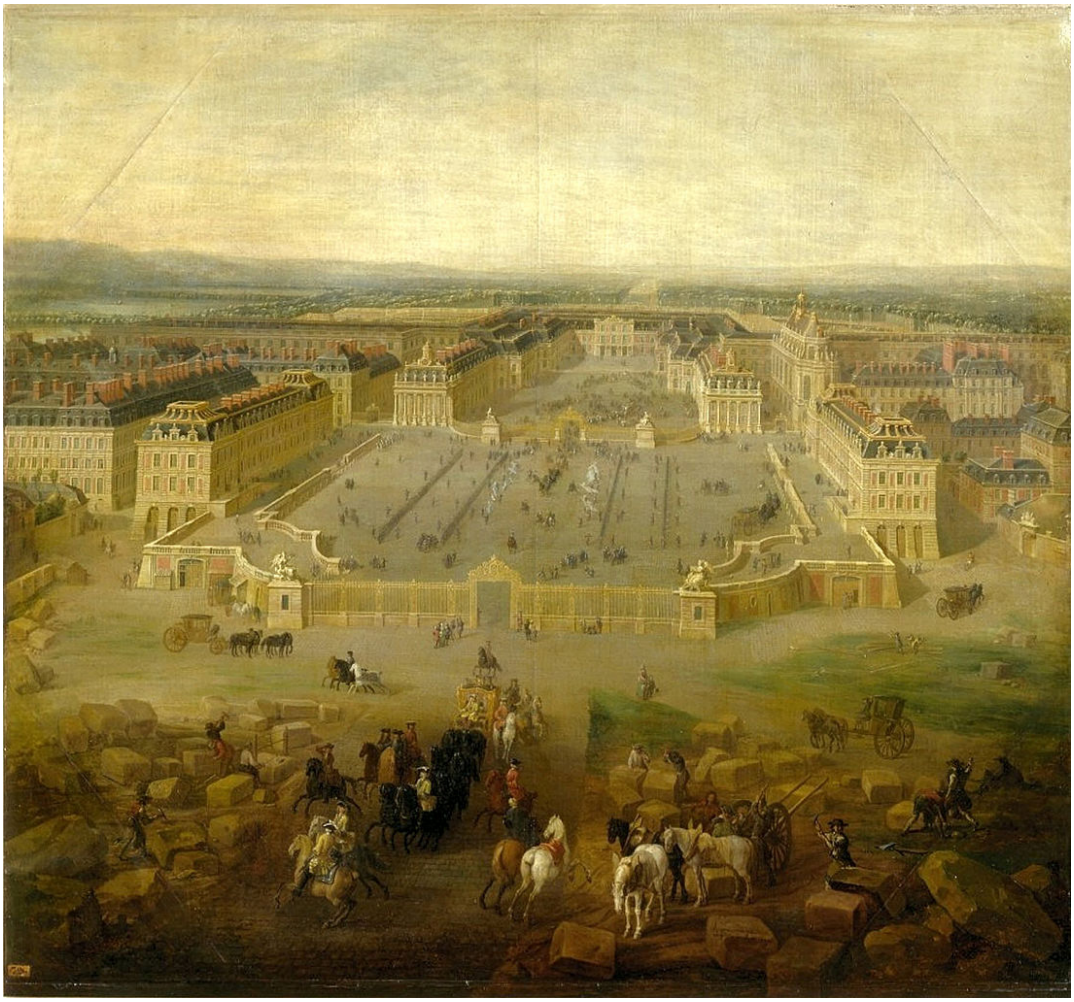

Fig. 3.7

The Palace of Versailles under construction at the time of Louis XIV's death

Pierre-Denis Martin
1722, Oil on Canvas
Chateau de Versailles Collections

and we shall be obliged to you to endeavor to poise their expectations.'[42] The recommended 'poise' or pause must have given L'Enfant cause to reconsider the first site, to initiate his survey of the land between Goose (Tiber) Creek and Georgetown, and driven his subsequent enthusiasm for its qualities. Some weeks later in his memorandum of 26 March, L'Enfant records a significant change of heart, identifying the outcrop (the aforementioned broken ground) extending west from Jenkins Hill (the current site of the Capitol) as an ideal location for the placement of critical buildings and public spaces overlooking the level plain that was to form the centre of the new city. From here, L'Enfant notes that:

> From these hights every grand building would rear with a majestic aspect over the Country all round and might be advantageously seen from twenty miles off …from the first settlement of the City they would stand to ages in a central point to it, facing on the grandest prospect of both … branches of the Potomac—with the town of Alexandria in front, seen in its fullest extent over many points of land projecting from the Maryland and Virginia shores in a manner as adds much to the perspective, at the end of which the Cape of Hunting Creek appears directly where a cornerstone of the Federal District is to be placed and in the room of which a majestic column or a grand pyramid being erected would produce the happiest effect and completely finish the landscape.[43]

Here the orientation of the city is turned outwards, making the extended hinterland, and the wilderness beyond, the organising device for the city.

This not only marks a radical shift in L'Enfant's conceptual direction from a contained whole, towards a commanding view over a vast landscape, but also indicates the significant expansion of the scope of his vision and the remit of his appointment. The reason for this change in direction is not documented as no record of the meeting between L'Enfant and Washington at the end of March has been found. The messages exchanged between Washington and Jefferson regarding the difficult negotiations with local landed interests suggest that a site incorporating both areas was always Washington's intention.[44] L'Enfant's Memorandum of 26 March articulates the implications of a larger area for the city, and the need to weave potentially distant

[42] Jefferson, "VII. Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 17 March 1791."
[43] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 45.
[44] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784."

pockets of habitation together into a coherent whole.[45] L'Enfant had advocated for such an ambitious plan some eighteen months earlier when he had solicited Washington for his commission, suggesting that:

> '…the plan Should be drawn on such a Scale as to leave room for that aggrandisement & embellishment which the increase of the wealth of the Nation will permit it to pursue at any period however remote.'[46]

In the Memorandum assumed to be dated 26 March 1791, he returns to these themes, speaking of a 'Capital of an Extensive Empire' and of streets '…laid out on a dimension proportioned to the greatness which … the Capital of a powerful Empire ought to manifest.'[47]

L'Enfant introduces three criteria for the plan: first the need to provide a system that would allow for the simultaneous development of disparate areas of the territory, rather than expanding from a concentrated centre;[48] secondly, he argues for a direct connection between nodes of public space and significant buildings, for which a 'regular assemblage of houses laid out in squares and forming streets all parallel and uniform'[49] would be inappropriate; and thirdly he dismissed such a regular grid plan, as sketched by Jefferson (Fig.3.8) as 'tiresome and insipide' and 'but a Mear Contrivance of some Cool imagination wanting a sense of the real Grand & trewly beautifull only to be Met with were Nature Contribut with art and diversify the objects.'[50]

The following week, L'Enfant was given full licence to pursue such an ambitious direction for the Federal City. The terms of the settlement had been established, and the onus for the land to be surveyed and 'laid off as a city' placed explicitly on the French engineer.[51] From this point L'Enfant assumed responsibility and an unfettered design freedom for the planning of the new settlement. Writing to Thomas Jefferson on 4 April 1791, he notes that 'the President has left to me without any restriction so Ever' and

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[45] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."
[46] L'Enfant, "To George Washington from Pierre L'Enfant, 11 September 1789."
[47] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 31.
[48] L'Enfant, 44.
[49] L'Enfant, 31.
[50] L'Enfant, 33.
[51] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784."

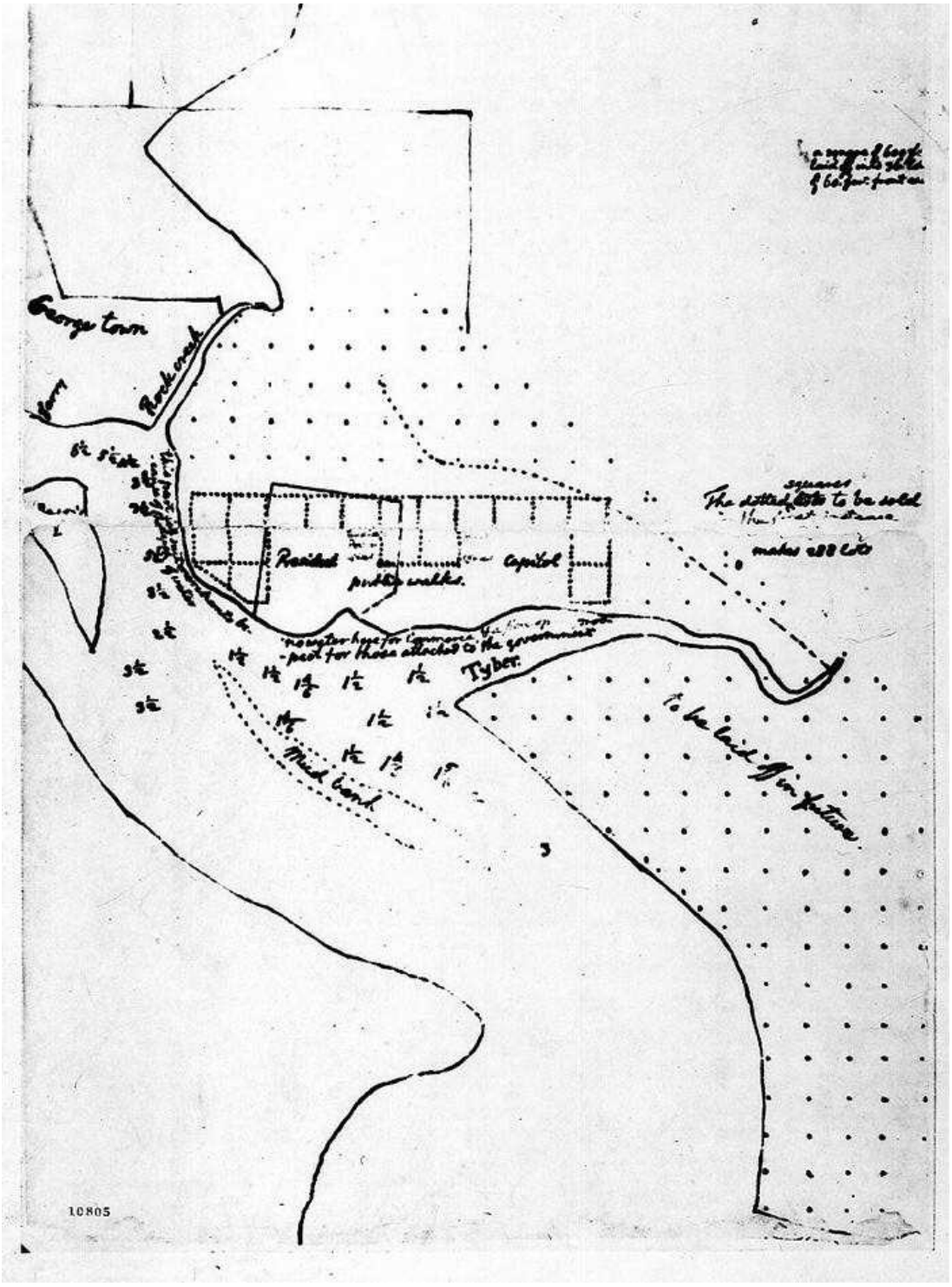

Fig. 3.8

Plan of the Federal district

Thomas Jefferson, 1791
Manuscript Map, Manuscript division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

commenced his work on this basis.[52] The first details of his plan emerged in late June in a letter to George Washington and described 'principal points …making the rest subordinate,' the regular distribution of streets 'at right angle *north-south* & *East-west'* and 'avenues to & from every principal places.'[53] The letter also refers to details such as the placement of 'three grand departments of state,' a continuity between parks, gardens and public walks, and 'play house—room of assembly—academies.'[54] The details vary between documents, but the June letter provides the first description of the placement of the President's House and Congress House and the remaining elements of the plan organised around it (Fig.3.9). Both are determined by the existing topography - the two natural rises flanking the tidal basin of the Tyber (Goose Creek) to the north and east. The site for Congress is located at Jenkins Hill which is described as 'a pedestal waiting for a monument,'[55] while the 'seat of the presidial palace' is placed slightly to the east of a site suggested by George Washington in March, with a view '10 or 12 miles down the potowmack front.'[56] Both these points are clearly visible in the 'Dotted Line' plan, and are fully developed as the setting-out points for the geometry of avenues, and the underlying hierarchies, in the L'Enfant draft.

In the absence of additional documentation, it has been necessary to carry out analysis of the two extant L'Enfant drawings and to use these to dissect the plausible sequence of decisions that led to the laying-out of the city.[57] Both these drawings emphasise the importance of the topography and the long views of the surrounding landscape that it afforded. The high points of the territory were established in L'Enfant's first survey, and the East-West ridgeline and the prominent rise of Jenkins hill are apparent from the topographic information recorded at the end of the eighteenth century (Fig. 3.10). These remain relatively consistent with contemporary spot elevation measurements.

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[52] L'Enfant, "X. Pierre Charles L'Enfant to Thomas Jefferson, 4 April 1791."
[53] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 33.
[54] L'Enfant, 36.
[55] L'Enfant, 35.
[56] L'Enfant, 36.
[57] The District boundary, and the positions of the Capitol and White House have been used to reconcile the following maps that have informed the drawn analysis: Hawkins, "Topography of the Federal City: Washington D.C. 1791."L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States"; L'Enfant, "Dotted Line Map of Washington, D.C., 1791, before Aug. 19th."

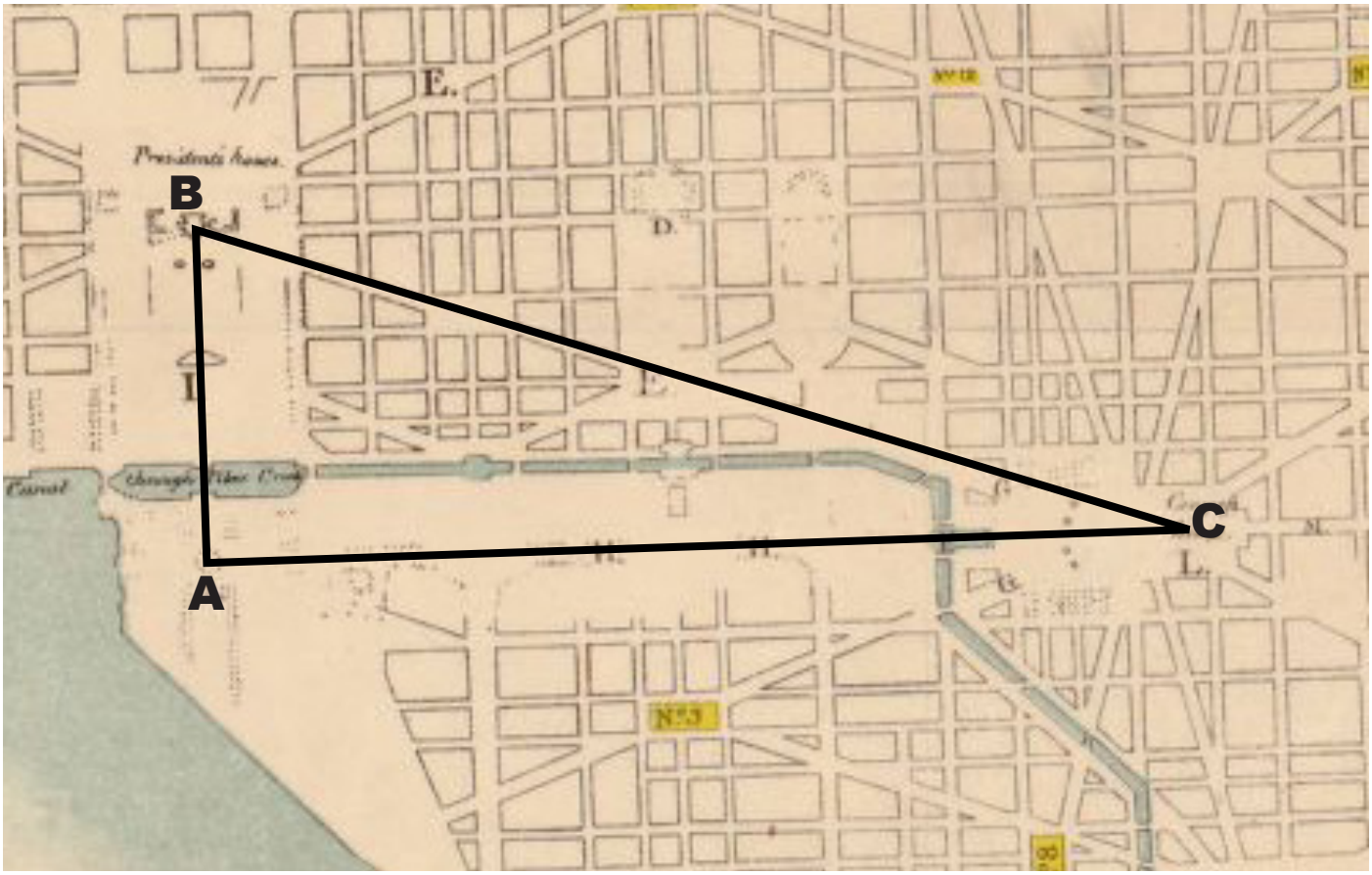

Fig. 3.9

Pierre L'Enfant Plan (Detail)

Pierre L'Enfant 1791
National Archives, Washington, D.C.

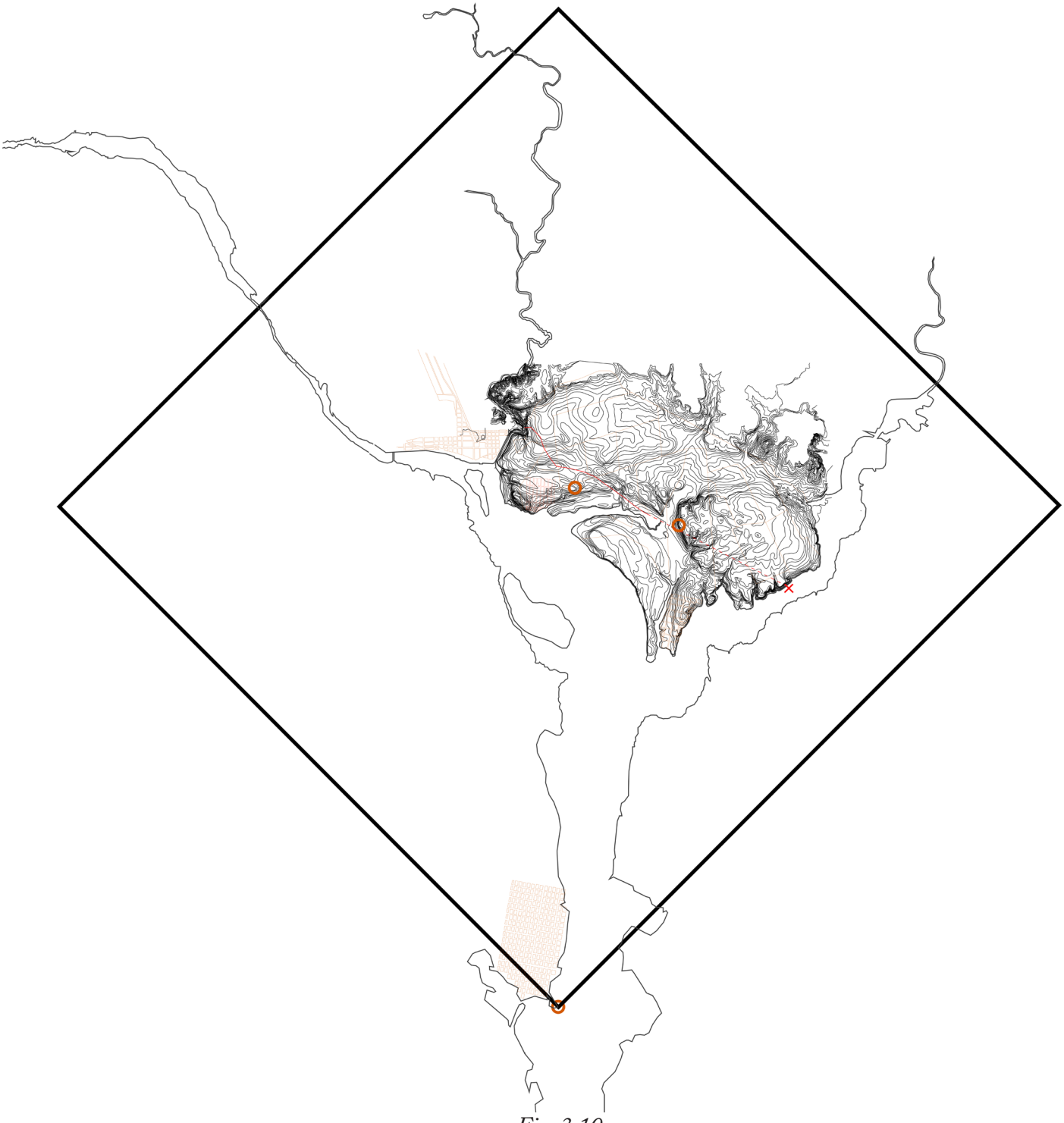

Fig. 3.10

White House and Capitol Locations 1

Existing settlements and thoroughfares shown in red, **O** shows the projected location of the White House and Capitol and the southern boundary point,
X indicates existing Eastern Branch crossing point.
The relationship of key locations to the topographic ridge line is apparent here.

The specific locations are not identified until June of 1791, but L'Enfant's mention of the 'grandest prospect' and the distant perspective towards the city's origin point at the Cape of Hunting Creek, established the view down the Potomac River as a critical device for the orientation of the city.[58] According to L'Enfant's drawings, this trajectory is then pinned, not only by the seat of Government as represented by Congress, but by what is now the White House, which was to combine 'the sumptuousness of a palace the convenience of a house and the agreableness of a country seat.'[59] The north-south line that runs through the proposed site for this 'palace' lies a few hundred feet to the East of the centre-line of the District as was being laid out by Andrew Ellicott.

By plotting the two sites, first against the existing topography and then the proposed boundary of the District, it appears that the position set by the President's House and its uninterrupted view down-river established an off-set from the vertical centre line of the District boundary that is repeated by a similar horizontal off-set locating the position of Congress along the ridge of Jenkins Hill (Figs.3.11). Here the Cardo and Decumanus of this new republic are shifted to align with the thinly populated landscape beyond the city and the President's view over it. By contemporary measurement, the distance between the District's axes and the centre lines of what is now the White House and Capitol are not consistent, there being a notable discrepancy of roughly two hundred feet; the distance between the boundary stone line and that of East Capital street measuring just over 1100 feet, and that to the vertical axis of 16th Street being approximately 1300 feet. At this stage the District boundary is not included in L'Enfant's plans. He was working in parallel to Ellicott, but the boundary survey was still incomplete and true lines-of-sight through the forested areas were difficult to establish. Given the visible similarity of the distances to the central axes, it is unlikely that L'Enfant would have drawn these unwittingly or been unaware of their implications.

The long view down the Potomac then ends, not at the boundary marker that L'Enfant had identified in late March as the potential site for a 'majestic column or a grand pyramid' to 'completely finish the landscape,'[60] but at the turn of the River at what is

[58] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 45.
[59] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 36.
[60] L'Enfant, 30.

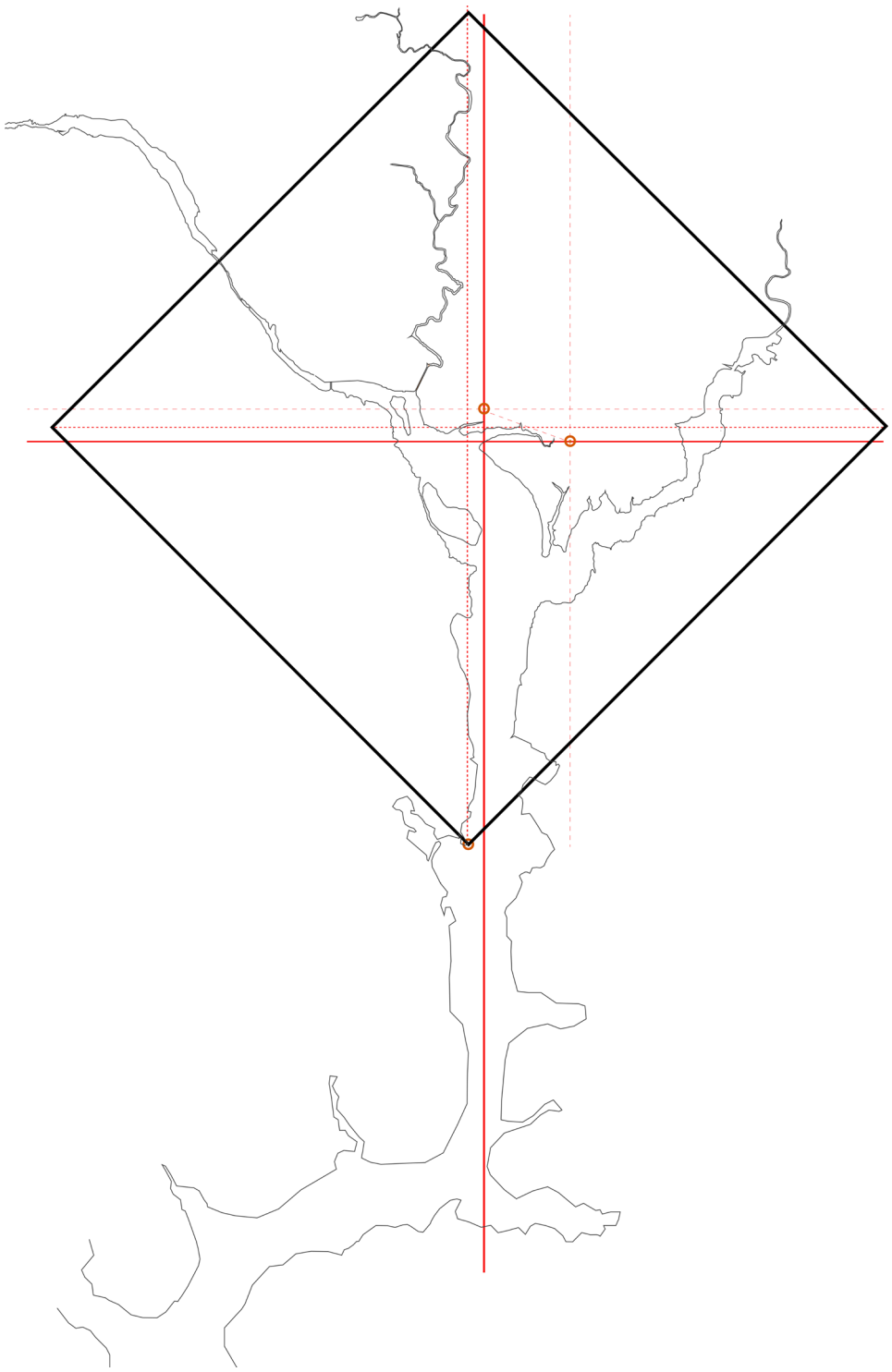

Fig. 3.11

White House Orientation 1

The White House is offset from the centre line of the District boundary to align to the most direct and open stretch of the Potomac River north-to-south. The equivalent offset is maintained in the location of the Capitol site, thereby bringing the immediate topographic orientation together with the organisation of the wider territory.

(Author)

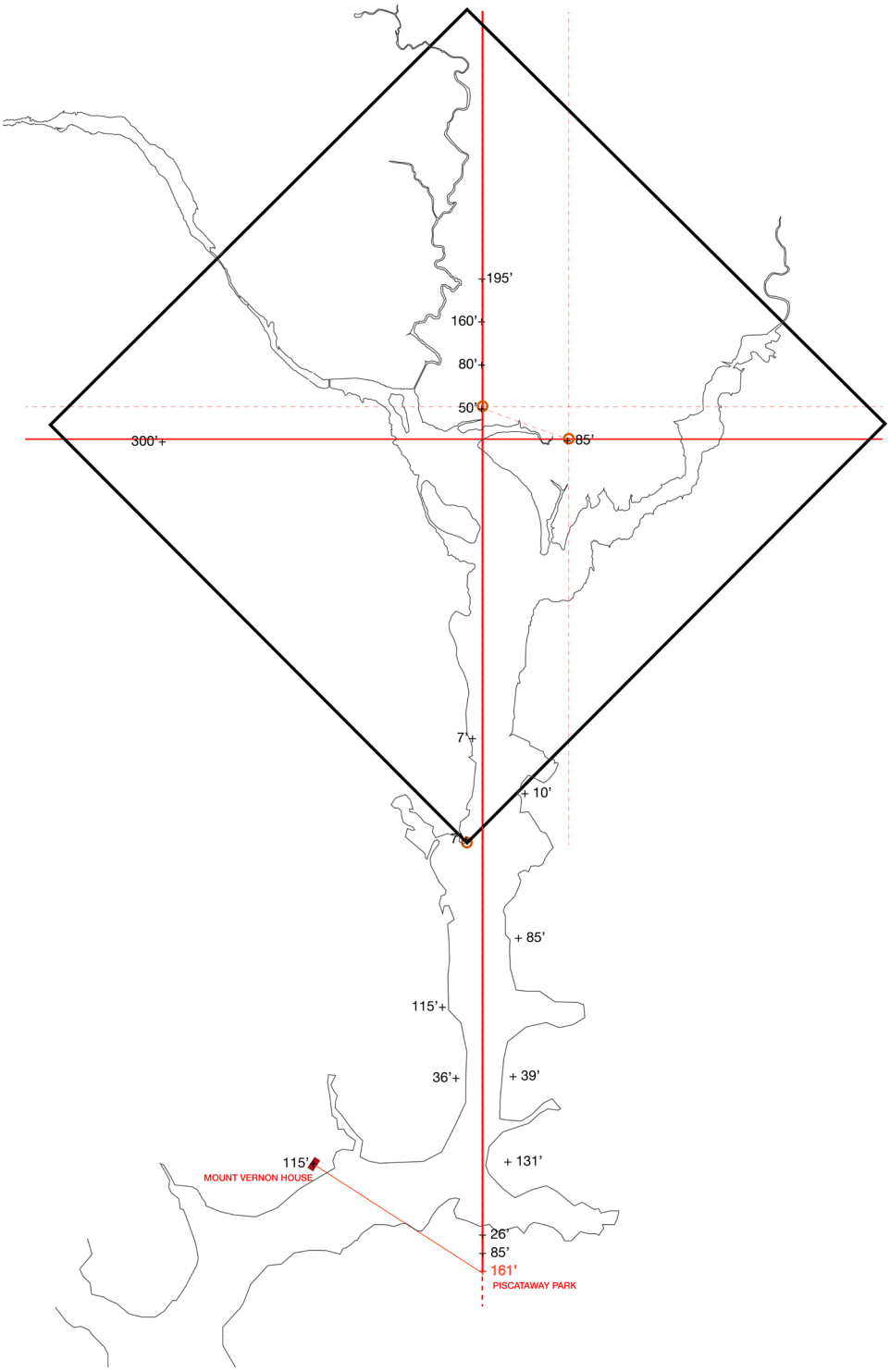

Fig. 3.12

White House Orientation 2

The spot heights along the Potomac and the view from the White House coincides with one of the few peaks in the surrounding terrain at what is now Piscataway Park. George Washington's house at Mount Vernon is oriented towards the same point. In this respect the President's immediate domestic view was matched and extended in the location of the executive house.

(Author)

now Piscataway Park, Virginia, some fourteen uninterrupted miles from the south front of what is now the White House. There are few notable topographic features along the Potomac's banks to the south of the District, but the extended perspective provided by the location of the President's House intersects with a highpoint in Piscataway Park which in turn corresponds to the vanishing point of the view made available to George Washington from the centre of his terrace at Mount Vernon (Fig. 3.12). Here the object of Washington's gaze as a citizen farmer is replicated and extended to become the gaze of the president looking out from his country seat.

Such a view may have been coincidental, but its importance is reinforced by two contemporaneous depictions of George Washington and his family, the first, a watercolour - *A view of Mount Vernon with the Washington Family on the Terrace* was painted in 1796 by Benjamin Latrobe (Fig.3.13). Latrobe depicts Washington and his family, but the arrangement of figures is focused on an unattributed man holding a long telescope directed at the view from the terrace towards the banks of what is now Piscataway Park. This situation and the corresponding view from the President's House within the L'Enfant plan are then reinforced in Edward Savage's painting *The Washington Family* started in 1789 (Fig 3.14) and completed in the same year as Latrobe's watercolour (1796). The centre of the composition is oriented to an extended riverscape, beyond the family grouping.

Given the extent of the perspective, the view corresponds to the expanse of the Potomac River as viewed from the President's House (the now White House). In the foreground of the painting, the plan of the Federal City is being unrolled on a table between husband and wife, by Martha Washington's granddaughter. Martha points to the plan of the city with her folded fan, this spot aligning with the hilt-tip of Washington's sword. Washington's right arm rests on the shoulder of his wife's grandson who, in turn rests his hand upon a globe holding a pair of compasses (Fig. 3.14).

The detail of the plan is distinct enough to be able to identify the line of the proposed canal where it turned west along the public walk between Congress House and President's House (Fig.3.14). The significance of this location is uncertain but the importance of the association of the family with the laying out of territory, the reorganisation of the natural topography in the form of the canal and the long view of the river is apparent. This constructed vista and the alignment of Mount Vernon and the

Fig. 3.13

A view on Mount Vernon with the Washington Family on the Terrace

Benjamin Latrobe, 1796
Watercolour on paper, Mount Vernon Collection

Fig. 3.14

The Washington Family

Edward Savage, 1789–1796
Oil paint, National Gallery of Art, East Building

President's House may not be significant in themselves, but they reinforce a relationship of both seats to their surrounding landscape and the importance of this landscape to the authority of the nation. They may also refer to the importance of Mount Vernon as George Washington's agricultural retreat, the place of his return after resignation from office as citizen farmer Cincinnatus.[61]

The heroic emphasis of such an orientation for the primary nodes of the new city has been previously overlooked or disregarded in the analysis of the plan. The north-south axis suggests a strong influence derived from Versailles and the primacy of the figure of both King and President is the same within the respective plans. The comparison is potentially problematic, but it would be wrong to assume that L'Enfant intended such a direct comparison; rather, they hold this form of geometric articulation of power in common. L'Enfant was already involved in the reconfiguration of a national image through his work at Federal Hall in New York. His commitment to the Revolutionary war effort, suggests that he must have been conscious of the divisive nature of a plan that celebrated centralised power. However, it is important to distinguish between the celebration of George Washington, the revolutionary hero and virtuous citizen, and the edification of the executive office.

The ten-mile square District is organised around three points: the President's 'palace,' now the White House, 'Congress House' and an equestrian statue of the President in the approximate position of the current Washington monument (Fig.3.9).[62] Both the President's House and Congress were positioned on the two promontories afforded by the existing topography and the arrangement is understood as representative of the balance of power between these two-out-of-three branches of government. It is important to note that although the Capitol building was to be the house of Congress, William Thornton's 1793 plan of the building provided for an executive apartment above the central rotunda, an inclusion 'dear to Washington's heart,'[63] thereby placing the President or his image at each major node of the plan. The nature of George Washington's authority was distinct and, within the post-revolutionary context, the symbolic placement of his image, residence, or office was not appropriate for a

[61] Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*; Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership."
[62] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[63] Peatross, *Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, D.C.*

republican leader, however the representation of the centralised authority of the leader of the republic was justifiable. This distinction is subtle but central to the concept of legitimate power in the early American nation; that society's moral order depended on the assurance of just governance, made virtuous by the integrity of its leader and the collective virtue of its people.

George Washington's Influence

Given L'Enfant's powerful iconographic emphasis on the office of the President, it is important to determine the extent of Washington's influence on the direction of the plan and to examine his personal and political vested interests in its character. Washington's active supervision of the plan is not well documented, and it is unlikely that he provided explicit direction over the course of its evolution. L'Enfant reported his progress to the President and outlined his preoccupations and ambitions in frequent letters to him,[64] but Washington responded in brief and there is no record of his opinion of the final L'Enfant plan other than a few minor adjustments communicated by Thomas Jefferson.

There are several explanations for his silence. First, the President had relinquished his legal control of the project to the three District Commissioners and was required to support their authority.[65] Any direct correspondence with L'Enfant could have been seen to confuse the direction of the work and to give Washington undue credit or, perhaps, unwonted blame for lack of progress. The appointment of the Commissioners was also necessary, as responsibility for the day-to-day control of the works could not rest with the President who was occupied with numerous affairs of state. Second, the President may not have regarded it politic to direct the planning of a city having advocated for its location so effectively; in C.M. Harris' words, 'to be the American Romulus, was not consistent with his carefully constructed persona.'[66] And finally, it is possible that Washington did not feel inclined to make aesthetic decisions - limiting his contribution to the pragmatics of the site through his experience as a surveyor: such decisions as where to locate more solid ground for significant public buildings; the scale and location of the District, the requirements of the central canal, and the process for

[64] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*.
[65] U.S. Laws & Statutes, *An Act to Establish the Seat of Government of the United States...September the 22d*.
[66] Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream," 534.

Fig. 3.15

Existing Settlements

Georgetown was already an established port town. Hamburgh was located in what is now Foggy Bottom and was laid out by German migrants who then settled elsewhere. Its configuration was shifted entirely by the L'Enfant plan. Carrollsburg was laid out but not developed by Daniel Carroll of Duddington (not to be confused with the Commissioner of the same name)

(Author)

selling lots to fund construction.[67] He abdicated responsibility for decisions involving the style of public buildings to Thomas Jefferson, who was both better travelled, and had a more explicit interest in architecture and planning.[68] It is important to stress that Pierre L'Enfant believed that he was working under the direct authority of the President up to the end of his appointment in February 1792. The project often fell victim to miscommunication between architect, President, Commissioners and local landowners and L'Enfant repeatedly failed to recognise George Washington's distance from the project or the authority of the District Commissioners.[69]

L'Enfant's conception of the President's role in the project was not misplaced. Whilst he may have absented himself from decisions involving the structure and layout of the city, Washington's interest in the potential for developing a site on the Potomac River was reinforced by his founding role in the Potomac Company. The political bargaining that decided the location of the Federal City did not include the commercial concerns of the Potomac Company, but the passing of the Residence Act, focused the priorities of the Company. The designated ten-mile square District was oriented at a 45° angle, at the President's instigation,[70] both to incorporate a maximum stretch of the Potomac River but also to include the established ports of Alexandria and Georgetown within the boundary of federal land (Fig.3.10 & 3.15). This would support the economic future of the new city, but it would also have secured the commercial feasibility of the canal, and tied the existing ports, and the initiative to bypass the falls above the navigable portion of the Potomac, to federal rather than competing state interests. This gave the new city the potential to become a vital commercial centre, which according to Peets would have had the character of an estuarine port similar to London.[71] Here George Washington's own commercial concerns could be seen as a means to support and sustain the interests of the new city and to create a viable national centre for both government and commerce.[72]

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[67] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 2 January 1791"; Washington, "From George Washington to Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, 4 April 1791"; Washington, "From George Washington to the Commissioners for the Federal District, 24 July 1791."
[68] Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson and the Creation of the American Architectural Image"; Benoit and Wilson, "Jefferson and Marly: Complex Influences."
[69] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 34; Stuart, "To George Washington from David Stuart, 26 February 1792."
[70] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 2 January 1791."
[71] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[72] Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream"; Littlefield, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."

The Residence Act determined the scale of the Federal District, but neither the Act nor the congressional debates that secured it, articulated a requirement for the city within its bounds, to be planned in its entirety. Thomas Jefferson's own initial sketches for the city were modest, drawing upon the plan of Philadelphia (Fig.3.16), which had evolved on a grid layout extending from a relatively small central port area - the scope of this initial idea being twenty to thirty times smaller than L'Enfant's 1791 plan. L'Enfant's dismissal of Jefferson's more discreet approach was undiplomatic, but it is understandable in relation to his own interpretation of the role of the city in the future of the country. Writing to Washington as early as 1789, L'Enfant claimed:

> No nation has ever before the opportunity offered them of deliberately deciding on the spot where their Capital City should be fixed, or of combining every necessary consideration in the choice of situation, and although the means now within the power of the Country are not such as to pursue the design to any great extent, it will be obvious that the plan should be drawn on such a scale as to leave room for that aggrandizement and embellishment which the increase of the wealth of the nation will permit it to pursue at any period however remote[…].[73]

The scale of the city had also become a function of a delicate calculation that would allow for the acquisition of lots and the release of sufficient land for the construction of the main public buildings that would house Congress. The control of this arrangement was left to the three District Commissioners. These men represented a spread of local landed interests and planning experience, as well as the concerns of the Potomac Company in which they were all investors.[74] These common concerns were not necessarily suspect, but they did give those involved an additional interest in the success of the project. It encouraged the pragmatic and rapid progress of the plan in a direction that was often at odds with L'Enfant's more ambitious vision for the city.

George Washington's initial engagement of Pierre L'Enfant, and the instructions that he gave, reveal a careful strategy to preserve the ambitions of the project, to manipulate an economically contingent release of land across the District, and to frustrate potential land speculation. The gradual dissemination of information and the extent of the first

[73] Kite; Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784"; Stuart, "To George Washington from David Stuart, 26 February 1792." .
[74] Asch and Musgrove, *Chocolate City*; Sweig, "A Capital on the Potomac: A 1789 Broadside and Alexandria's Attempts to Capture the Cherished Prize," 103.

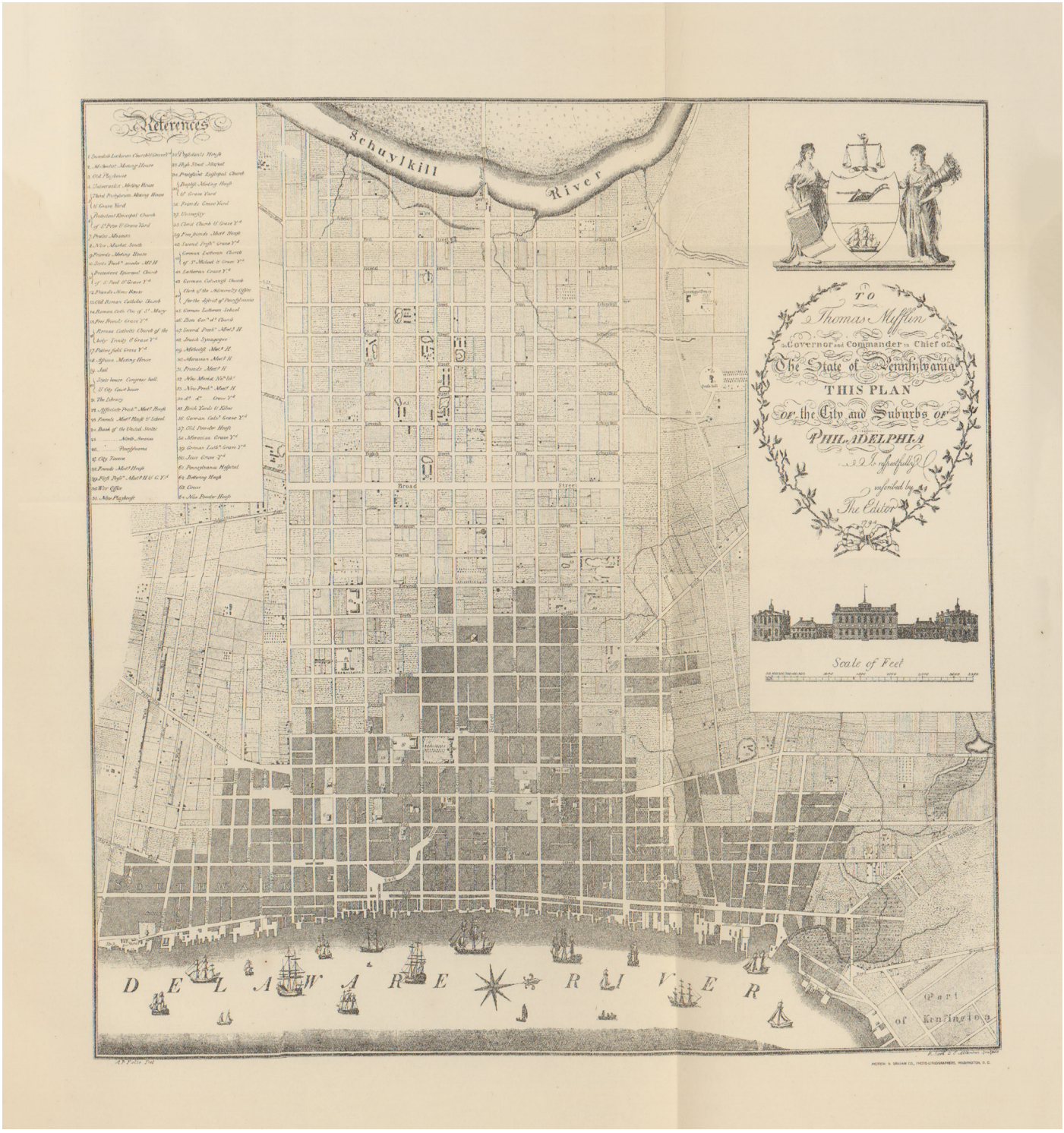

Fig. 3.16

Philadelphia

"Philadelphia", Map showing plan of the city and suburbs of Philadelphia, 1794.
Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection
The University of Texas at Austin

surveys and planning stages were orchestrated to obscure the full extent of the plan from existing landowners until their agreement had been secured.

By contrast, L'Enfant was effusive in his early descriptions of the site and his ambitions for its organisation.[75] He started his first survey in the area around 'Goose Creek' (now Rock Creek) on 11 March 1791 in thick fog.[76] This initial review of the land identified areas of topographic prominence that might suit the location of the primary buildings in the city. His first report to Washington is extensive, detailing the condition of the ground, the prospects from the proposed locations of public buildings, the possible locations for bridges and so on.[77] This and subsequent memoranda were met with little response from the President, and Washington's visits to the site were infrequent. Over this early period when the layout of the city was taking shape, Washington's efforts appear to have been limited to the procurement of land and the securing of ongoing funds for the project. His two notable visits to the site at this time, first in late March and then June, deal very directly and briefly with these matters.[78]

At the time of his first meeting with the Commissioners, on 28 March, a layout of the ten-mile district and the grounds 'in the vicinity George Town and Carrollsburg on the Eastern branch'[79] had been drawn for review. Washington's own record of events focused on the need to persuade the relevant landowners to comply with the proposed sale. On 29 March, George Washington noted that 'the interests of the Landholders about George Town and those about Carrollsburgh [were] much at variance and that their fear and jealousies of each were counteracting the public purposes and might prove injurious to its best interests.'[80] By the following day the 'Agreement of the Proprietors of the Federal District' had been drawn up and signed by twelve of the twenty landed interests, six more signatures being added over the following days. The agreement

[75] L'Enfant, "III. Pierre Charles L'Enfant to Thomas Jefferson, 11 March 1791."
[76] L'Enfant.
[77] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."
[78] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784"; Washington, "From George Washington to William Deakins, Jr., and Benjamin Stoddert, 17 March 1791"; Washington, "Diary Entry: 28 June 1791"; Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 18 August 1791."
[79] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784."
[80] Stevens and Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. Vol. I, 1745-1756*, 20:153–54.

dictated that '[T]he President shall have the sole power of directing the Federal City to be laid off in what manner he pleases.'[81]

Alongside this open endorsement, the agreement also gave half the acquired land over to public use, the other for private sale, the terms of which were ratified as Maryland Law in December of the same year. These tripartite interests, the endorsement of presidential authority and the distribution of public and private land were to work together to secure the success and continuity of the city's development and, in this respect reinforced the extent of L'Enfant's vision. The parallel nature of these symbolic and pragmatic concerns is apparent in Washington's letter to L'Enfant in early April which, while in broad support of the artist's early plea for an extensive city plan, emphasised that his concern was not with 'aggrandizement and embellishment,' but with obtaining ground so as to 'encrease [sic] the Revenue...not only to the public, but to the individual proprietors; in as much, as the plan will be enlarged, and thereby freed from those blotches, which otherwise might result from not comprehending all the lands that appear well adapted to the general design.'[82]

The occasion of the President's next visit on 27 June was brief. According to his Diaries, he arrived on the morning of the 27th from Mount Vernon, met with the Commissioners and landowners 'giving some explanation of the present state of matters and the consequences of delay in this business.'[83] The following day 'whilst the Commissioners were engaged in preparing the Deeds to be signed by the Subscribers,' he went out with L'Enfant and Ellicott to 'take a more perfect view of the ground, in order to decide finally on the spots on which to place the public buildings.'[84] Washington's entry for the next and final day of his visit records his only substantial contribution to the detail of the scheme. He writes:

> -A Plat was also laid before them of the City in order to convey to them general ideas of the City but they were told that some deviation from it would take place – particularly in the number of diagonal streets or avenues, which would not be so numerous; and in the removal of the President's house more westerly for the advantage of higher ground – they were also told that a Town house, or exchange

[81] Twohig, *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series, March – September 1791*, 8:24.
[82] Twohig, 8:63.
[83] Washington, "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 29 March 1784."
[84] Stevens and Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. Vol. I, 1745-1756*, 20:200.

> would be placed on some convenient ground between the spots designated for the public buildings. before mentioned. – and it was with much pleasure that a general approbation of the measure seemed to pervade the whole.[85]

He then left Georgetown at four the next morning and returned to Philadelphia. The absence of Washington's Diaries between 5 July 1791 and 30 September 1794 is particularly unfortunate as this would have been the most likely location of any comment on L'Enfant's plan. It is clear however that with his extensive experience as a surveyor, the President would have understood the implications of the proposal and the effect of its physical extent. His long association with Freemasonry would also have equipped him to recognise the importance of a symbolic and geometric ordering of the city – particularly as the Order used emblems and geometric relationships to represent 'a moral tendency' which in turn were intended to stimulate 'the practice of virtue,' a concept central to Washington's discipline of personal character cultivation.[86]

For the first few months, work on the city plan proceeded with the full approval of the President and his Commissioners. Beyond Jefferson's unease over the scale of the enterprise and its grandiose nature, work was unimpeded until disagreements over a schedule for the publication of L'Enfant's plan led to conflicts with the Commissioners.[87] Whilst L'Enfant cited logistical difficulties in obtaining a suitable engraving plate as the cause for the delay, he had also been vocal in his disapproval of the proposed method for the sale of lots. It was his opinion that the lots and the plan for the city should be mortgaged for a loan to complete the works rather than relying on local land speculation which might effectively give way to a more erratic and discontinuous development of the city.[88] This suggests that, however unlikely, L'Enfant was holding his plan back from the October sale to undermine the efforts of the Commissioners.

These moves isolated L'Enfant from the interests of those invested in the project. The growing divisions distanced L'Enfant's vision of 'an undertaking of magnitude so worthy of the concern of a grand empire' from the pragmatic concerns of financing and

[85] Stevens and Fitzpatrick, 20:201.
[86] Bullock, "A Pure and Sublime System," 370.
[87] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 18 August 1791"; Lear, "Tobias Lear to Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, 1 September 1791"; Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 22 February 1792."
[88] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 68.

building a seat of government.[89] L'Enfant's instruction to demolish a house intruding into an area designated for a public square in the plan made this apparent. The horror of the Commissioners was obvious, the house of Daniel Carroll of Duddington destroyed (although related, not to be confused with the Commissioner of the same name) and the affront seen to be personal. This, combined with the lack of a reliable copy of L'Enfant's plan, made it clear that the authority of the Commission was being flouted. Conversely L'Enfant came to believe that the Commissioners were in opposition to the 'complete achievement' of the city, over whose progress 'the nations of the world, watching with eyes of envy, themselves having been denied the opportunity, will stand as judge.'[90]

Washington and Jefferson were both vocal on this matter. In the autumn of 1791, the President wrote:

> 'I wished you to be employed in the arrangements of the Federal city. – I still wish it; but only on the condition that you can conduct yourself in subordination to the authority of the Commissioners, to whom by law the business is entrusted, and who stand between you and the President of the Unites States.'[91]

The sentiment is echoed by Jefferson in December:

> I confess, that on view of L'Enfant's proceedings and letters latterly, I am thoroughly persuaded that to render him useful, his temper must be subdued; and that the only means of preventing him giving constant trouble to the President, is to submit him to the unlimited control of the Commissioners. We know the discretion & forbearance with which they will exercise it. [92]

The dissatisfaction of the key proponents of the scheme gave licence to the mutual dissatisfaction of L'Enfant and the Commissioners. Writing to George Washington on 12 January 1792 they expressed direct opposition to L'Enfant and a distrust of his methods such as 'the adoption of unprepared plans to warrant the digging of long, deep, wide ditches in the midst of winter, which if necessary at all might be done much cheaper in any other season.'[93] The stop that was then put to the works had dire

[89] Kite, 72.
[90] Kite, 72.
[91] Kite, 84–85.
[92] Kite, 96.
[93] Kite, 105.

consequences. The workers refused to halt work until ordered by L'Enfant himself. They expressed their direct loyalty to L'Enfant, who in turn believed that he was working towards a higher purpose under the authority of the President as distinct from the concerns of the Commissioners. L'Enfant's deputy, Roberdeau became the direct victim of this misunderstanding, arriving in Georgetown from the quarry at Aquila where L'Enfant had stayed on, to find:

> ...our concerns in a terrible state; the Commissioners had discharged the commissary, the overseers, and all the hands, and with the rest I received a written discharge. The agitation I was thrown into was inconceivably great – I rushed into the Commissioner's apartment and vindicated my conduct most strenuously...unfortunately I was thrown off my guard and insulted them in a public and indecent manner.[94]

Roberdeau was then imprisoned as a result and much of L'Enfant's subsequent conciliatory efforts were designed to arrange for his release rather than the repair of his own relationship with the Commissioners.[95]

The conflict between the Commissioners and L'Enfant culminated in his removal from the project in February 1792.[96] The events that led to such a rapid deterioration in the course of the project are complex and are customarily ascribed to L'Enfant's character and his reluctance to follow instructions from anyone other than Washington himself. The absence of Washington's diaries from 5 July 1791 to 30 September 1794 leave no evidence of the President's instructions, critique, or direction, and we have little insight as to his opinion of the developing plan.

The absence of Washington's own commentary at this critical moment makes it difficult to determine whether the conflict arising at this stage of the project was a product of personal disagreement and logistical difficulties or whether it reflected growing friction between republican and federalist factions in government. C.M. Harris points to this latter factor as central to the breakdown in relations between L'Enfant and the Commissioners and identifies the President's control of the plan and his approval of

[94] Kite, 109.
[95] Washington and Twohig, *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*. Vol 9
[96] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 22 February 1792."

L'Enfant's strategy as an indication of his centralising politics.[97] For Harris, the plan had also been driven by L'Enfant's association with Alexander Hamilton, the connection creating significant discomfort for Jefferson in particular, who had had direct experience of the Bourbon court and perceived 'the social threat to republicanism posed by the metropolitan concept.'[98] In Harris' opinion, Jefferson and the Commissioners, who prevented any further reconciliation in response to what they regarded as the wayward political direction of the President, orchestrated L'Enfant's removal.[99] It is also plausible that the scale of the plan itself elicited unease.

There is evidence that the Commissioners were eager to limit its scope but there is little solid evidence to suggest that this was the result of political rather than financial unease. In his letter to George Washington, David Stuart does indeed challenge the scale of the project more ideologically – 'The Major's [L'Enfant's] ideas are perhaps on too large a scale even with respect to others. At least I have heard complaints on this head from several' and goes so far as to suggest that '…it may suit the genius of some despotic government, to create an immense and gloomy wilderness in the midst of a thriving City, and I fear the Major has borrowed from thence; but I cannot think it suitable in our situation.'[100]

Such politically inflected frustration may also be read as part of a larger exasperation with L'Enfant's behaviour. L'Enfant had built himself into an independent authority, working to an independent goal. He reportedly lied to the Commissioners about the extent to which Washington authorised his work, his work force would answer only to him, and he had obtained the support of the local proprietors of the land in opposition to the Commission.[101] By the time of L'Enfant's dismissal, the District Commissioners had lost critical control of the project despite being responsible for the allocation of funds and as David Stuart wrote to the President in February 1792, 'Major L'Enfant's conduct, and his Deputy's has (as you have been informed) embarrassed us much.'[102] The successful progress of the city on these terms was inconceivable and securing the

[97] Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."
[98] Harris, 547.
[99] Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream."
[100] Washington, "From George Washington to Bushrod Washington, 9 November 1787"; Stuart, "To George Washington from David Stuart, 26 February 1792."
[101] Commissioners for the District of Columbia, "To George Washington from the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, 21 January 1792."
[102] Stuart, "To George Washington from David Stuart, 26 February 1792."

completion and future prosperity of the city remained essential. Had plans faltered, Congress being scheduled to relocate in just eight years, the basis for the union and the compromise realised in the Residence Act of 1790 may have been irreparably undermined.

Given the urgency of the situation, it is difficult to see how the unravelling of the L'Enfant plan would have benefitted the national interest. At this point in American history, the need to create a strong seat of constitutional government, to secure and legislate a unified nation, and a move towards a centralised, 'federalist' state, were virtually indistinguishable from one another. There was a direct association between republicanism and 'small' government, but this tendency cannot be directly translated into a 'small' city and the federalist alternative cannot be seen as correspondingly grand. Returning to a previous discussion, it is important to remember that the creation of the capital was an act of consolidating authority. Until the plan was initiated, there was no one definitive form for this city to take. Up to this point, authority rested with the benevolent person of the President: an uncontentious, unifying figure for the new nation. Thereafter, the image of George Washington was given a symbolic language that could be extended to form the basis for a new national iconography. Within this context the question is not whether the dismissal of L'Enfant was symptomatic of Washington's misplaced desire to create a grand representation of a federalist state, but whether L'Enfant was able to distil the taut relationship between presidential authority and an idealised Classical republic into urban form.

The Creation of George Washington

Recent work on Washington, D.C. has interpreted the arrangement of avenues and the dispersed nature of the plan as a 'stage set … where people would act out the process of democracy and federalism'[103] or 'a visible expression of the Confederation of States.'[104] These are plausible approaches and valuable to our understanding of the city's subsequent development, but they are not evidenced by the plan or L'Enfant's correspondence. Privileging a reading of the plan as a symbol of balanced government places the iconographic significance of the office of the President in opposition to

[103] Berg quoted by Fayyad, "Monument to Democracy."
[104] Sonne, "The Capital City as a Microcosm of the State: The Case of Washington."

representational democracy. By contrast, post-Revolutionary American citizens and leaders were opposed to tyranny but were not averse to centralised power or its representation.

The new seat of government adopted George Washington's name on September 8th, 1791 at the first meeting of the Federal Commissioners. The naming of the city was uncontested and indeed, was widely anticipated. This moment is significant in that it underscores the extent to which George Washington had already become mythologized - his authority presented as an embodiment of personal freedom rather than despotic power.[105] This distinction is critical not only to the perseverance of the executive office in the institutional structure of American politics, but also to the relative ease with which the iconography and rituals of kingship were grafted onto the structure of the Federal City. The definitive character of the L'Enfant's plan of 1791, and the relative lack of controversy associated with it, belies the post-Revolutionary friction that preceded it.

The idea of national union had created the imperative for a permanent seat of government by 1790, and the basis for the representation of centralised power was inconclusive. As noted by Gordon S. Wood, the concept of a republic with its requirements for homogeneity, mutual self-interest and manageable scale were incompatible with the dispersed nature of the thirteen, confederated states in the late eighteenth century.[106] The crafting of the executive office as a singular receptacle of federal power, articulated by the Constitution in 1787, then depended upon the ability to reintroduce monarchical aspects of control in order to regulate disparate state democracies. This produced a dual form of government, which in Jefferson's words, 'wears a mixed aspect of monarchy and republicanism.'[107] For more dedicated federalists such as Alexander Hamilton, the introduction of an executive authority was to provide neutral supervision and beneficent control, creating the basis for unified financial and military opposition to foreign powers, and lending a dispersed population a sense of common destiny.[108]

[105] Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*.
[106] Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*, 17. P.17.
[107] Jefferson, *Memoirs, Correspondence and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 3:356.
[108] Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government*, 1970.

The associations with monarchy were obvious to most and distressing to many, but these were made palatable through the respect and trust associated with the specific character of George Washington, if not the office of his presidency. Thus, the traits of honesty and humility attributed to Washington justified the extent of his power and in the case of the L'Enfant plan, the figure of the President became a vehicle for the celebration of such attributes. By raising the status of the virtuous first citizen to that of a monarch in the configuration of the plan, L'Enfant could be seen to be providing a strong counterpoint to representations of centralised power in Europe.[109]

Such arguments had their detractors but for those advocating a centralisation of the union, the setting out of a system of government and the construction of its seat were acts of an absolute authority. It was the balance of this authority with the freedom of the citizens it served that became central to how the structure of government and the office of the President were interpreted in the early post-Revolutionary era.[110] It is important to stress that American politics in this period consisted of an ambiguous amalgam of differing theories - each of which were set against the perceived excesses of the French monarchy, or ancient, imperial Rome - and they framed the role of government in relation to the liberty of the people in a broad variety of ways.[111] At this stage, party-political divisions were not clearly defined and diverging interpretations of the relationship of the individual to the state were not contradictory. This is an important background to the development of the Federal City insofar as it was influenced by the unifying authority of the President. For those advocating a republican state, the person of the President was a figure of virtue and a valuable symbol for the propagation of a wise and virtuous society, upon which the security of the nation depended.[112] The enlightened self-interest of the Liberal individual also benefitted from this representation of leadership - reliant as it was on a strong, balanced and legally defined government, centred upon both the morality and prudence of its leader. Both approaches were rooted in the intellectual climate of the time, which provided complex representations of power, as well as a highly developed understanding of how these representations might influence behaviour. The creation of George Washington's image

[109] Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*, 76.
[110] Schechter, Elkins, and McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*, 24:34–36.
[111] Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, 72–76.
[112] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*; Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government*, 1970.

was a part of this tradition and was of subsequent value as an organising symbol for the Federal City.

Much of George Washington's personal history is coloured by the status he had achieved by his death in 1799 and the posthumous celebration of his founding role.[113] It is difficult to find factual support for the exceptional and exemplary nature of Washington's persona. His military prowess was limited and his political judgement not always astute. However, the need for a unifying figure and the subsequent depiction of his personal character were more important than the reality of his contribution and were central to the way in which America was constructing an image of itself. Ideas of control, self-control and the limits on personal liberty that George Washington was seen to embody, were issues that informed the structure of the American constitution and the factionalising debates that followed. These political ideas could be represented analogically by an individual's character. This form of symbolism was harmonious with concurrent thinking about the relationship between the state and its citizens. The relationship was understood to be mutually dependent, and the worthy behaviour of individuals seen as essential to the stability of the nation. The reflexivity of this relationship created frequent correlations between the personal characteristics of public figures and the character of the commonwealth. In the case of Washington, his image and personal history became amplified, even distorted, to embody the virtues of the nation. The representation of his character then gave a recognisable structure to this relationship.[114]

For Revolutionary-era Americans, the example set by heroic figures offered a necessary template for 'republican' or 'virtuous' behaviour in the absence of the clear social structure provided by the colonial aristocracy.[115] The avid response of the public to biographies of Revolutionary heroes and the publication of engravings of their portraits and significant deeds is testament to this tendency.[116] The construction of Washington's character in particular, centres on the relative austerity of his upbringing, his renunciation of power, his physical prowess and stature, and the relative control of his

[113] Wood, "The Greatness of George Washington."
[114] Howe, *Making the American Self*: *Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 12; Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership," 34; Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*, 161.
[115] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*; Bailyn and Garrett, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1765*; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*.
[116] Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*.

temper. This points to the need for the individual in the late Enlightenment to identify worthy figures for emulation, their example inspiring virtue.[117] In the case of George Washington this image reinforced contemporaneous themes of a return to origins and freedom from excess, essential to the character of the republic.

The relative humility of George Washington's origins was the source of much of his mythological status and these were promoted as a moral message through posthumous biographies such as Parson Weems' *Life of Washington*.[118] Weems in particular is responsible for the parables of Washington's early life, the cutting of the cherry tree and subsequent 'I cannot tell a lie,' becoming the schoolroom synopsis of Washington's moral integrity. As it was these biographies that disseminated the moral message of his life to the general public, they became the basis for Washington's image as the citizen farmer, acquiring, cultivating and governing the land, and then the nation with requisite skill and care. It is a concept that roots the figure of the President in the principles of the late Enlightenment - the return to origins and freedom from excess, prefigured by Rousseau and then transposed onto the character of the republic.

There are an extensive number of visual depictions of George Washington during this period that support this reading, as well as substantial attempts to craft a ceremonial programme around the office of the President. He was a figure, standing at six foot three, who was poised to receive such a treatment - statuesque, aloof, adored and 'massively monumental,'[119] with apparently little to say. This living symbol was then disseminated through portrait paintings, historical narratives and sculptures that promoted the President to an international audience.[120] To reinforce the image of radical humility, the President is typically shown without military honours or the accoutrement of office. He is placed into the mid-ground of John Trumbull's paintings - in the fray of battle, secondary in focus to other revolutionary figures (Fig.3.17). According to Gary Will's he is portrayed as above all else a citizen, the nation knowing 'that the highest recognition it could offer him was as a citizen leader.'[121]

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[117] Wills, 63.
[118] Weems, *The Life of Washington*, 79–80.
[119] Wood, "The Greatness of George Washington," 190.
[120] Banning and Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment.*Greenhalgh, "'Not a Man but a God': The Apotheosis of Gilbert Stuart's Athenaeum Portrait of George Washington."
[121] Banning and Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment.*

Fig. 3.17

The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777

John Trumbull, ~1795
oil painting, Yale University.

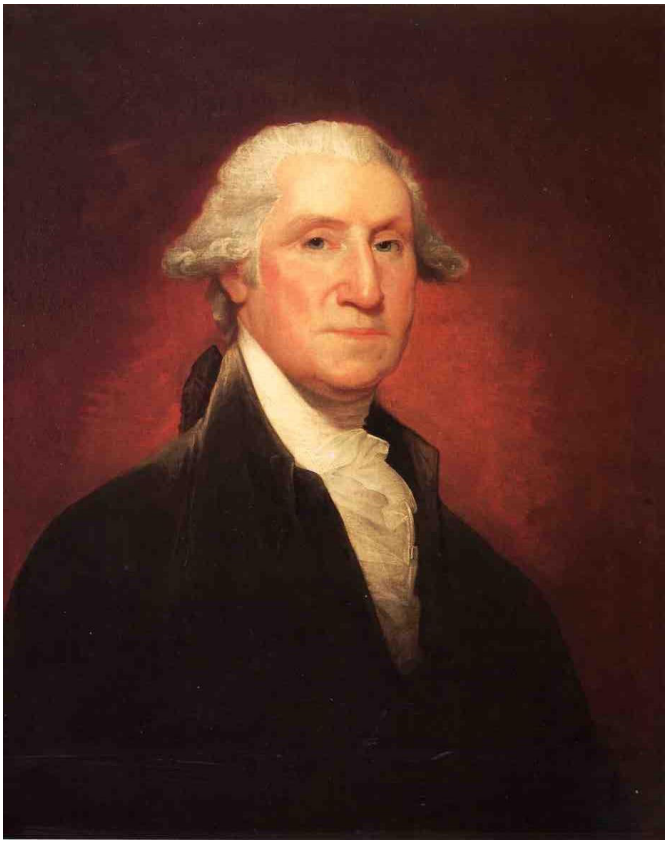

Fig. 3.18

George Washington

Gilbert Stuart, 1795
Oil on canvas Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 3.19

Portrait of George Washington

Charles Willson Peale, 1776
Oil paint, The Brooklyn Museum, New York

The symbolism employed by his portrait artists such as Charles Wilson Peale and Gilbert Stuart is similarly understated, portraying him on the field of battle (Fig.3.19), with his family (Fig.3.14), or in isolation in simple dress and pose (Fig.3.18). Similarly, allegorical descriptions of Washington are rare and limited to posthumous elegiac work, and even these depict him as supplicant to 'America' or 'Liberty' rather than in the triumphant ascent that typified early nineteenth century paintings of even Benjamin Franklin (Fig.3.20, 3.21, 3.22). Washington is depicted collectively as the father of the nation, a reluctant and simple leader who had repeatedly sacrificed himself for the good of the union, through the command of the Revolutionary army, the support of the new constitution, and most importantly, through his repeated resignations from public office and military command (Fig 3.23, 3.24).

This subservience, however idealised, became the primary focus for his representation and a means to set the nature of Presidential power apart from that of other leaders. This highly crafted image was then brought to an international audience through the work of Canova and Houdon (Fig.3.25, 3.26), the sculpture of Washington being Canova's only American work, which reveals the wider resonance of such a figure, despite the divergence of the two concurrent revolutionary cultures in America and France.[122] These depictions present Washington as both a national, revolutionary figure and an international symbol of moral authority leading a paradigmatic republic. For artists working on both sides of the Atlantic, the framing of Washington's character and the control of his iconographic representation thus reflected a broader understanding of the role of the heroic individual in society and their capacity to embody universal virtue for both domestic and international audiences.

Both the accentuation of the characteristics of classical virtue in the person of Washington, and the broader the emulation of worthy figures, were part of the period's reliance on the example of republican Rome, which provided a model alternative to the perceived monarchical excesses of Old Europe. For George Washington, the classical precedent and its popular representation were equally important. He modelled his image on the established archetypes of Addison's *Cato* and the Classical figure of *Cincinnatus* both of which he had been introduced to by Lord Fairfax in the pre-revolutionary era.[123]

[122] Starobinski, *The Invention of Liberty 1700-1789*.
[123] Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership."

Fig. 3.20

Apotheosis of Washington

John James Barralet (After Gilbert Stuart), 1800–1802
Engraving and etching, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

While both of these exemplars had served Washington personally as models for his advancement in society, they subsequently became potent symbols of the nature of his leadership, his emulation of the reluctant leader Cincinnatus, called from his farm to dictate the laws of Rome in the 5th Century BC, in particular, enabling him and his exponents to draw parallels between his leadership and the governance of republican Rome, thereby reinforcing the new nation's role as a living example of a virtuous state.

The pattern of Washington's rise to prominence follows this model precisely, twice called to arms and positions of leadership, and quick to resign on each occasion. According to biographer Weems, in the second instance, he was 'suddenly called on by his country, to turn his plough-share into the sword, and go forth to meet a torrent of evils which threatened her,'[124] at which point he assumed significance as a leading figure of the Revolution. While Washington's subsequent war record was not exemplary, he appears to have retained an exceptional aptitude to command and to sustain the allegiance of his troops, of which Pierre L'Enfant was one, through the extensive duration of the Revolution. His ability to stem his soldiers' disillusionment and maintain their loyalty was seen to be critical to the success of the new nation.

Washington's eventual resignation from the army and from public life in 1783 established his military endeavour as a self-less act and gave moral authority to his proposals for government. It is here that Washington defines himself most powerfully as a citizen, reluctantly pressed into the service of his country. It is also at this point that Washington becomes most readily compared to Cincinnatus. Replicating this model twice, first in the resignation of his military Commission and then in the resignation of the Presidency in 1796, and in both instances returning to Mount Vernon to pursue his agricultural interests strengthened this association and made the symbolic return to the land a vital component of his moral character.[125] The celebration of these humble interests echoed the concurrent preoccupations of agrarian republicans such as Jefferson and reinforced the relationship between individual cultivation of the land and the wider self-sufficiency of the country, which remained as important as any military conquests or political manipulation.[126] In this respect the urgent preoccupation with building the

[124] Weems, *The Life of Washington*, 58.
[125] Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership."
[126] Stevens and Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. Vol. I, 1745-1756*.

Fig. 3.21

Apotheosis of Washington

David Edwin, 1800
Engraving and etching, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.

new nation physically, as much as politically, is made apparent and supports the kind of material manifestation of nationhood that would have informed the setting out of the Federal city.

The Federal City's emphasis on George Washington's emblematic status is a critical example of the American reconfiguration of the heroic tradition as an allegory of new nationhood. The adjustment of recognized representational motifs borrowed from history, and from concurrent European city and garden planning, contributed to the development of a distinctly American iconography. These precedents were reframed within a republican context, but the sheer scale of the Federal City and the monumentality of its primary axes appear to be irreconcilable with the depiction of the President as humble 'first citizen,' or to be suitable as the seat of Revolutionary government. The careful reframing of the figure of Washington himself, and the rebalancing of his authority within the structure of government, may have made such a plan palatable. His personal supervision of the plan was deemed acceptable due to his previous withdrawal from public life which served to enforce his perceived political neutrality.

In the period between his resignation as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army at Annapolis in 1783 and his inauguration as President in 1789 he had exempted himself from an explicit role in the detailed development of constitutional government until James Madison's request for him to chair the Philadelphia Congress in 1787.[127] This enabled him to uphold his resignation pledge of 1793 and to avoid the undue influence that his position as Revolutionary figurehead might command.[128] Such an attempt to abstain from public political life supports his availability as a unifying figure, but also points to the difficulty of such a prominent personality, to hold official office during this period of political flux. It was equally difficult for the political debate of the time to be centred on a singular idea, symbol, or place without heavy contestation. The broad acceptance of Washington's authority suggests that after his war-time role and resignation, he was seen to have assumed an exalted moral position above any specific political issue or factional debate. Here George Washington is treated as an embodiment of Revolutionary history rather than an explicit proponent of a mode of government. It

[127] Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership."
[128] Rutyna and Stewart, *The History of Freemasonry in Virginia*.

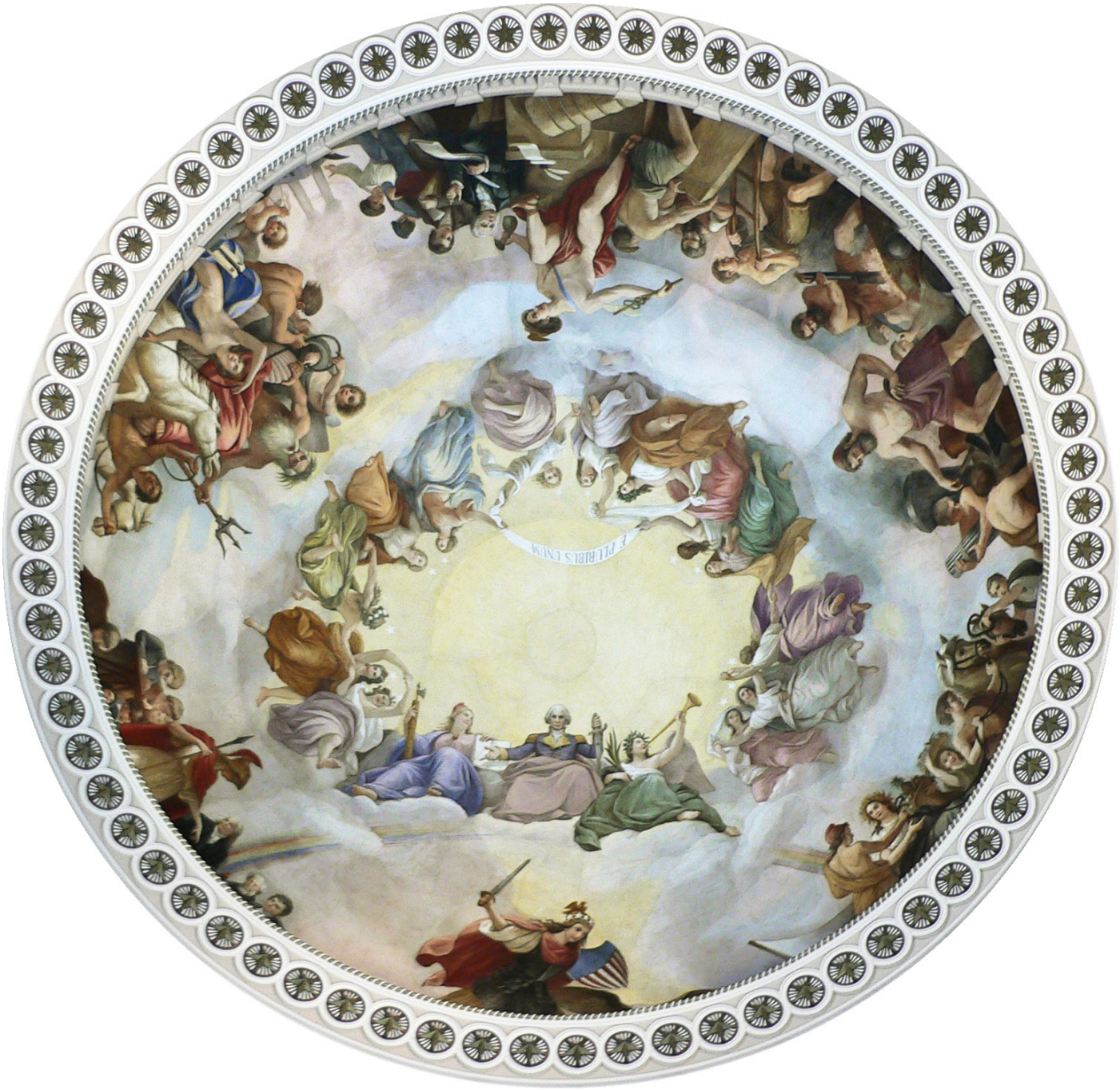

Fig. 3.22

The Apotheosis of George Washington

Constantino Brumidi, 1865
Mural, Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.

is possible that the contentious scale and monumentality of the Federal City were able to reflect this elevated status and exist outside political factionalism through their association with Washington's authority and his personal supervision of the project.

Upon assuming the chairmanship of the Philadelphia convention, and weathering the subsequent criticism that followed, Washington's role as the Executive authority of the new government had been assured even before his election to the Presidency.[129] By the time he was inaugurated at the Federal Hall in New York in 1789, even the risk he had taken in support of the Constitution had been reframed as an act of self-sacrifice for the sake of the public good.[130] At this point his authority as father, founder and legislator was absolute, and the unity of the nation was seen to depend on it. As we will see, Washington's unquestioned authority had direct implications for the development of the Federal City. Prior to L'Enfant's conflicts with the Commissioners, the presidential support of the project allowed it to proceed largely unhindered in its initial stages and the President's personal patronage gave L'Enfant an unprecedented degree of independence. These two factors contributed significantly to the comprehensive nature of the plan, its massive extent, and primary structure.

The scale of the city was then established based on George Washington's personal authority and the influence of his heroic persona; in combination these created a paradigm which had the power to sanction the physical manifestation of the seat of new national government. The cultivation of character and country appeared as parallel and compatible concerns. The subsequent emphasis of the L'Enfant plan on the ceremonial importance of the executive office enhanced Washington's heroic role within the American imagination. It also reinforced the President's own introduction of an iconographic programme designed to lend gravitas to the executive office and decorum to the rituals associated with it. According to Wood, George Washington adopted a new set of conventions, such as bi-weekly formal *levees*, that were to give 'the new government the pomp and ceremony many thought it needed.'[131]

[129] Lantzer, "Washington as Cincinnatus: A Model of Leadership."
[130] Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*, 174; Washington, "From George Washington to Bushrod Washington, 9 November 1787"; Peatross, *Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, D.C.*; Washington, "From George Washington to Charles Carter, 14 December 1787."
[131] Wood, "The Greatness of George Washington," 205.

Fig. 3.23

General George Washington Resigning His Commission

John Trumbull 1817
Oil on Canvas, Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.

Control of the image of George Washington became a source of partisan conflict within government, but according to Newman, the celebration of his person remained part of popular festival culture through the 1790s and evoked a strong collective memory related to the commemoration of royal birthdays.[132] Thus the institutional and public pageantry crafted by and around George Washington were intrinsic aspects of early American political engagement. They both reasserted Federal power while reaffirming the consent of the citizenry through their participation in the rituals associated with it. In this way the formal aspects of L'Enfant's scheme, reliant as they were on motifs taken from the French Court at Versailles and the planning of *Places Royales* in eighteenth century France,[133] were compatible with the representation of new American government. Although opposed to the arbitrary authority of the King, those structuring the new nation were not opposed to more general celebrations of centralised authority, particularly when these celebrations were mediated by the figure of George Washington.

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L'Enfant's employment of George Washington the man and the leader, as the symbolic focus of the Federal City is consistent with the nascent American understanding of the distribution of authority in 1790. In L'Enfant's words, the city was to be arranged 'in such a manner as to give an idea of the greatness of the empire as well as to engrave in every mind that sense of respect that is due to a place which is the seat of a supreme sovereignty.'[134] Here the use of the presidential figurehead as the generator for the primary geometry of the Federal City conflates an evolving ideology of eighteenth-century kingship with the specific iconography associated with national resonance of Washington's individual heroism. Such a dual representation of the President reflects L'Enfant's own understanding of the Revolutionary general and unifying leader, and his personal experience of Washington's military command, having served with him at Valley Forge in 1778, the latter reinforcing the importance of his personal authority in the planning of the city. The city plan is a reflection of this personal interpretation and

[132]Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, 1999. p.46.
[133] Konvitz, "Grandeur in French City Planning under Louis XIV Rochefort and Marseille"; McClellan, "The Life and Death of a Royal Monument"; Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Regime.*
[134] Peatross, *Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, D.C.*, 65.

Fig. 3.24

General Washington's Resignation

John James Barralet, 1799
Engraving and etching, Mount Vernon

the series of circumstantial factors that affected it, as much as it is structured around idealised representations of heroism, virtue and individual authority.

L'Enfant's interpretation of George Washington's image and its emphasis within the plan for the city gave legitimacy to the role of the Executive office. It is impossible to reconstruct the detail of the original plan or test the architectural or symbolic implications of L'Enfant's intentions, but he was not seeking to place George Washington in the role of monarch. For L'Enfant, Washington was an individual who had come to stand for the nation and its principles, and therefore served as a potent and available symbol before the country had developed a coherent iconography. L'Enfant was unabashed in his aim, the city being designed for the 'great patron of the establishment whose personal glory the grand end concerned.'[135] In this capacity he was unopposed, the use of Washington being an acceptable pedagogical example, the contemplation of which might 'excite others to tread in the same glorious and disinterested steps, which lead to public happiness and private honor.'[136]

The monumentality of the plan for the Federal City draws on an aspect of Washington's personal history that was at odds with the construction of his character as the humble citizen, but these should not be seen as incompatible. The idea that a good man could also be a good and powerful leader was critical to the success of the new union and its representation of itself. In fact, George Washington's capacity to sustain his heroic stature through his political ascendancy represents an unusual convergence of the expression of republican idealism through the iconography of kingship. This iconography, in turn, became the vehicle for mediating between practical concerns of the city plan and the wider project of structuring the extended landscape of the wider district. This thesis argues that the orientation towards the figure of the president brought the ceremonial structure of the city plan together with contemporary patterns of survey and settlement - in each case the organisation of territories reinforcing the complex layers of early American political structures. The overlay of imagery associated with centralised authority, an orchestration of an expansive landscape, and the anticipated modulation of the ceremonial and everyday life of the city is evident in

[135] Peatross, 93.
[136] Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream," 9.

L’Enfant’s plan. The dissection and analysis of these layers is the subject of the next chapter.

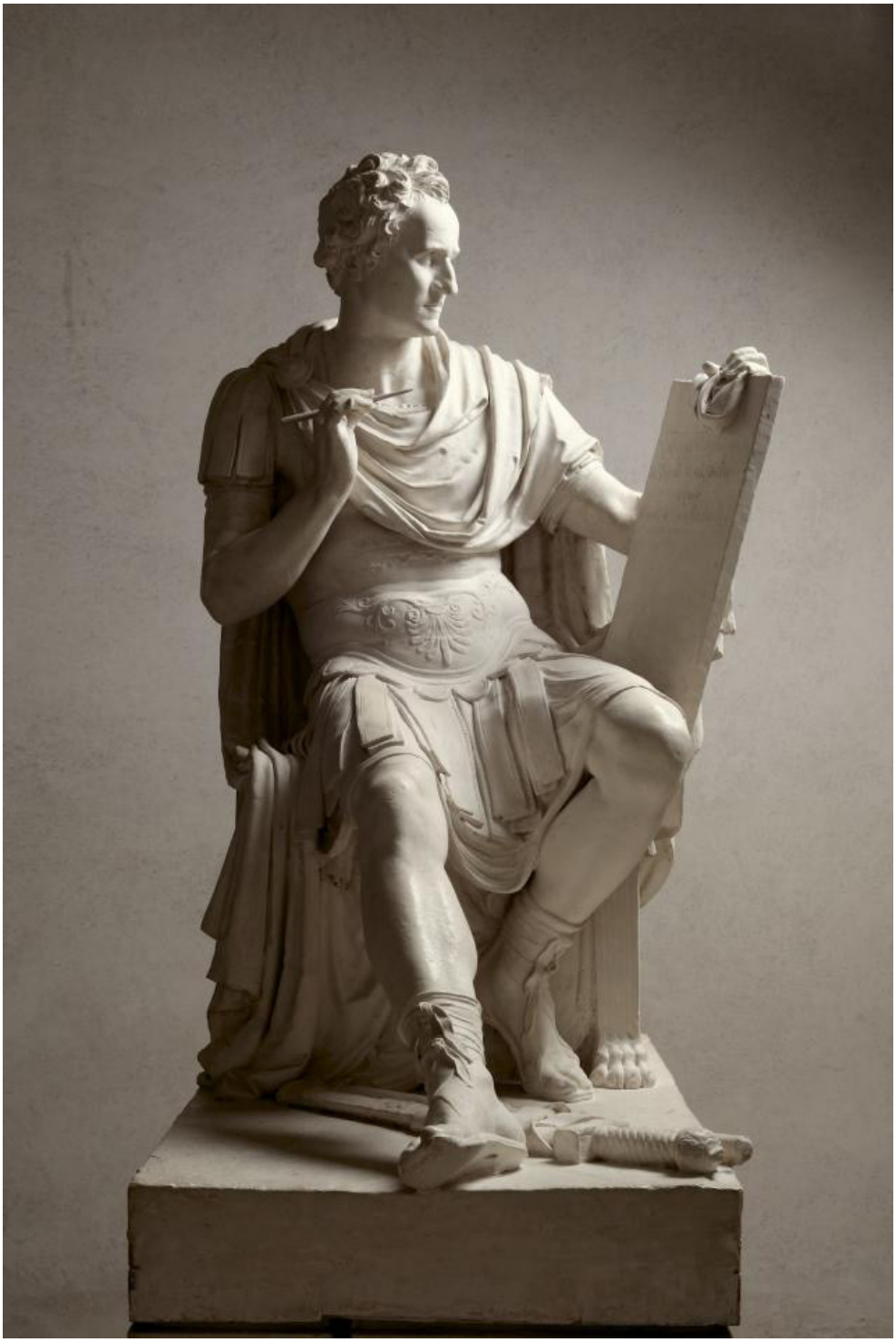

Fig. 3.25

Modello for George Washington

Antonio Canova, 1818
Plaster, Gypsotheca e Museo Antonio Canova, Possagno
final version in Raleigh State House, North Carolina

Fig. 3.26

General Washington

Jean-Antoine Houdon, 1792
Marble, State Capitol, Richmond Virginia

Part Two

The Order of the Plan
Ceremonial Order and the Everyday City

Chapter 4: The Order of the Plan.

Elbert Peets warned that an indication of Pierre L'Enfant expectations for the plan of the Nation's Capital 'when all the evidence is in, … is mostly circumstantial…'[1] While this is true, it does not detract from the detail provided by the original 1791 drawings, or the multiple facsimiles of the plan produced in 1792, 1887, 1900 and more recent digitisations produced in 1991. Indeed, this is the only substantial evidence available. The new analysis of these plans provided here offers a new interpretation of L'Enfant's work. The subtle variation between the versions of the work is sufficient for a comparative reading of its characteristics against a history of real and ideal cities as they were recorded and understood at the end of the eighteenth century. When contextualised in this way, I argue that the L'Enfant plan provides evidence of the nature of the American translation of European social and political ideas, and the potential represented by a sparsely populated new nation in the process of defining its institutional order and the mechanisms for further expansion. Furthermore, the plan exposes how the character of the city, and the civic space it contained, determined a uniquely American pattern of urban life through the distribution of land, density and orientation to park and landscape, that has persevered over the past two centuries and structures an on-going discourse on American urban life.

To understand the layers of the L'Enfant plan and their resonance within the eighteenth-century American context it is important to dissect the hierarchy of the plan's arrangement. The following section outlines the location of the main civic buildings, the orientation of primary avenues, the modulation of the secondary network and block

[1] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 19.

structure, and the configuration of critical public spaces. This analysis has been conducted through isolating these constituent parts through an original mapping exercise, drawing upon the digital record of L'Enfant's 1791 plan (hereto referred to as the L'Enfant plan), the alternative variations described in subsequent facsimiles, and the so-called 'Dotted-line' plan. In the fifth chapter, this material is then related to concurrent ideas regarding the configuration and use of urban ceremonial space and the everyday rhythms of eighteenth-century urban life in the United States and Europe. The material produced here facilitates a new reading of the multiple and occasionally contradictory influences on the configuration of the Federal City. This goes some way to elucidate the anticipated role of the city as both a living settlement and an international symbol of national priorities, potential growth and the structure of governance.

As there is no record of L'Enfant's preparatory drawings, and few detailed references to his intentions, the rationale behind the connections made across the site needs to be derived from a careful cross-referencing of the Dotted line and L'Enfant plans, the engravings completed by Andrew Ellicott in 1792, an analysis of the existing topography and settlements, and mention of critical connections between spaces or access to specific locations. This is done here through a careful tracing of each generation of the plan, a process that has hitherto not been attempted. Indeed, since Partridge and Peets' early twentieth century re-appraisal of the plan, there have been only a handful of appraisals of the drawn material, none of which have systematically documented the structure of the plan or detailed the inconsistencies between the various reproductions, copies and facsimiles. [2]

The results of such a study are conjectural in part and partially compromised by probable distortions present in the L'Enfant documents, given their original poor state of preservation and possible inaccuracies in their digitisation. However, it remains possible to uncover points of symmetry, intersection and trajectory in the planning of the matrix of avenues that typify L'Enfant's plan. This method of study borrows from cartographic analysis and acknowledges the same problems of distortion and inaccuracy

[2] *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Summer 1979) includes three important papers that benefitted from ultraviolet and infrared scans of the original plan in advance of its restoration. Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City"; Stephenson, "The Delineation of a Grand Plan"; Ehrenberg, "Mapping the Nation's Capital The Surveyor's Office, 1791-1818."

that dog that field.[3] Here the study identifies specific sites connected by projected boulevards and highlights areas of apparent similarity, visible to the naked eye but undermined by careful measurement. It is virtually impossible to determine how L'Enfant might have edited his own work and while Andrew Ellicott resolved irregularities within the plan, L'Enfant disowned these changes either out of an authentic rejection of the surveyor's choices, or a wider sense of disappointment at having been dismissed.[4] Furthermore, the contemporary manifestation of the layout digresses substantially from its original design and several of its original organisational devices were altered by the McMillan Commission's work of 1901.[5]

Archival Sources

There are five key documents which will be analysed here: the Report of 22 June 1791; the Plan of July/August 1791 (the 'L'Enfant Plan'); the 'dotted-line' plan; the report of the 19 August 1791 and the Ellicott plan of 1792.

Report of 22 June 1791

The first mention of a plan for the city is contained in Pierre L'Enfant's report to George Washington of 22 June 1791, preserved in the National Archives. The description contained in the June report is thought to have been written by Isaac Roberdeau (assistant surveyor to L'Enfant), dictated by L'Enfant, and details the planner's intentions in full. L'Enfant makes initial apologies for 'the smalness of the scale of the general map together with the hurry with which I had it drawn.' However, there are significant specifics provided: the location of primary institutions, the laying out of avenues, of the block grid, and the canal. The document to which this detail refers is the subject of some disagreement. Most historians of the city, Partridge included, and the archival record have determined that this plan was lost.

[3] Crowell, Leatherman, and Buckley, "Historical Shoreline Change: Error Analysis and Mapping Accuracy"; Jenny and Hurni, "Studying Cartographic Heritage: Analysis and Visualization of Geometric Distortions."
[4] Ellicott, "'To Thomas Jefferson from Andrew Ellicott, 3 April 1792,.'"
[5] Brown, "The Making of a Plan for Washington City."

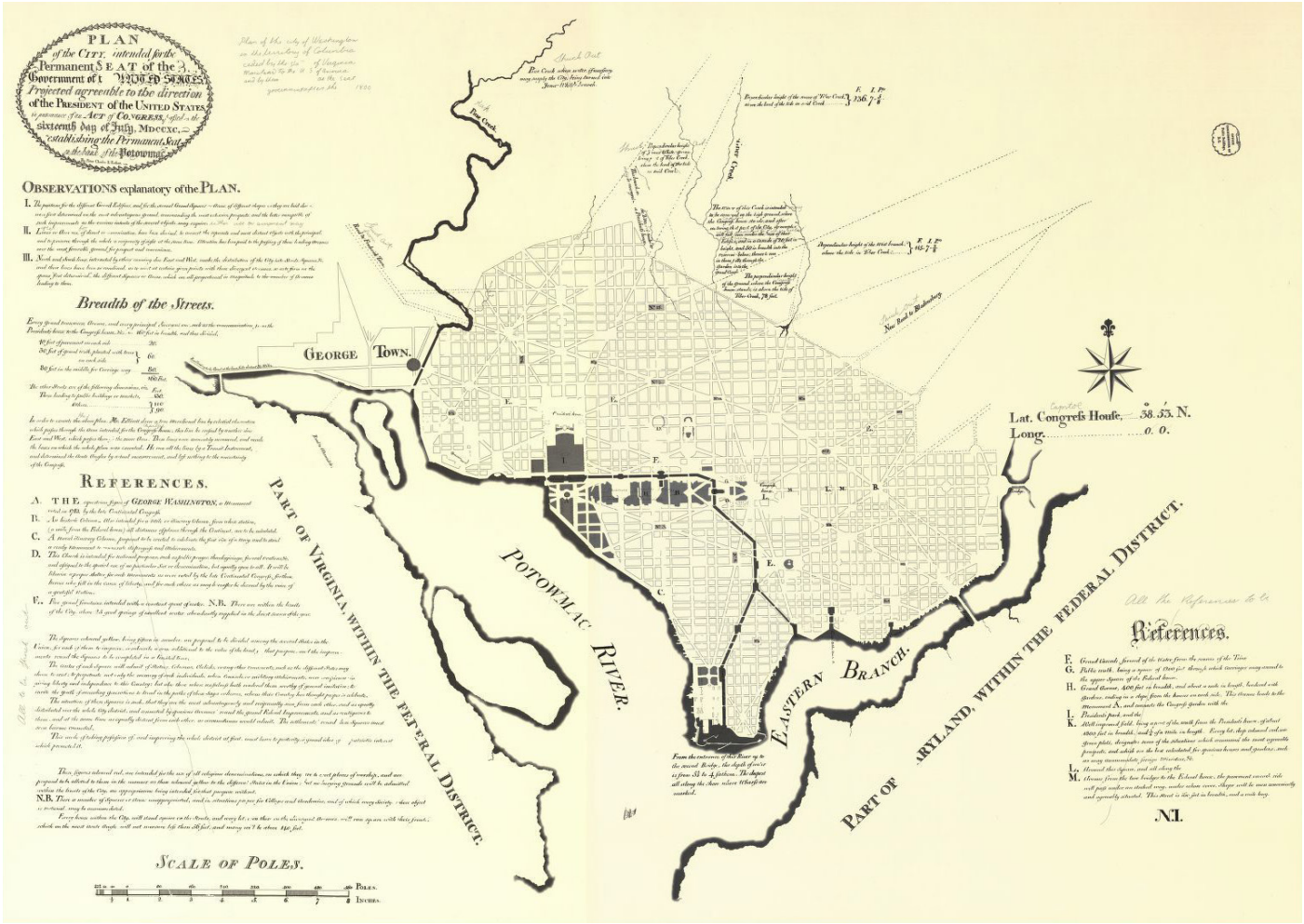

Fig. 4.1

Computer-assisted reproduction of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 manuscript plan for the city of Washington.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,

(1991)

Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.
https://lccn.loc.gov/97683585

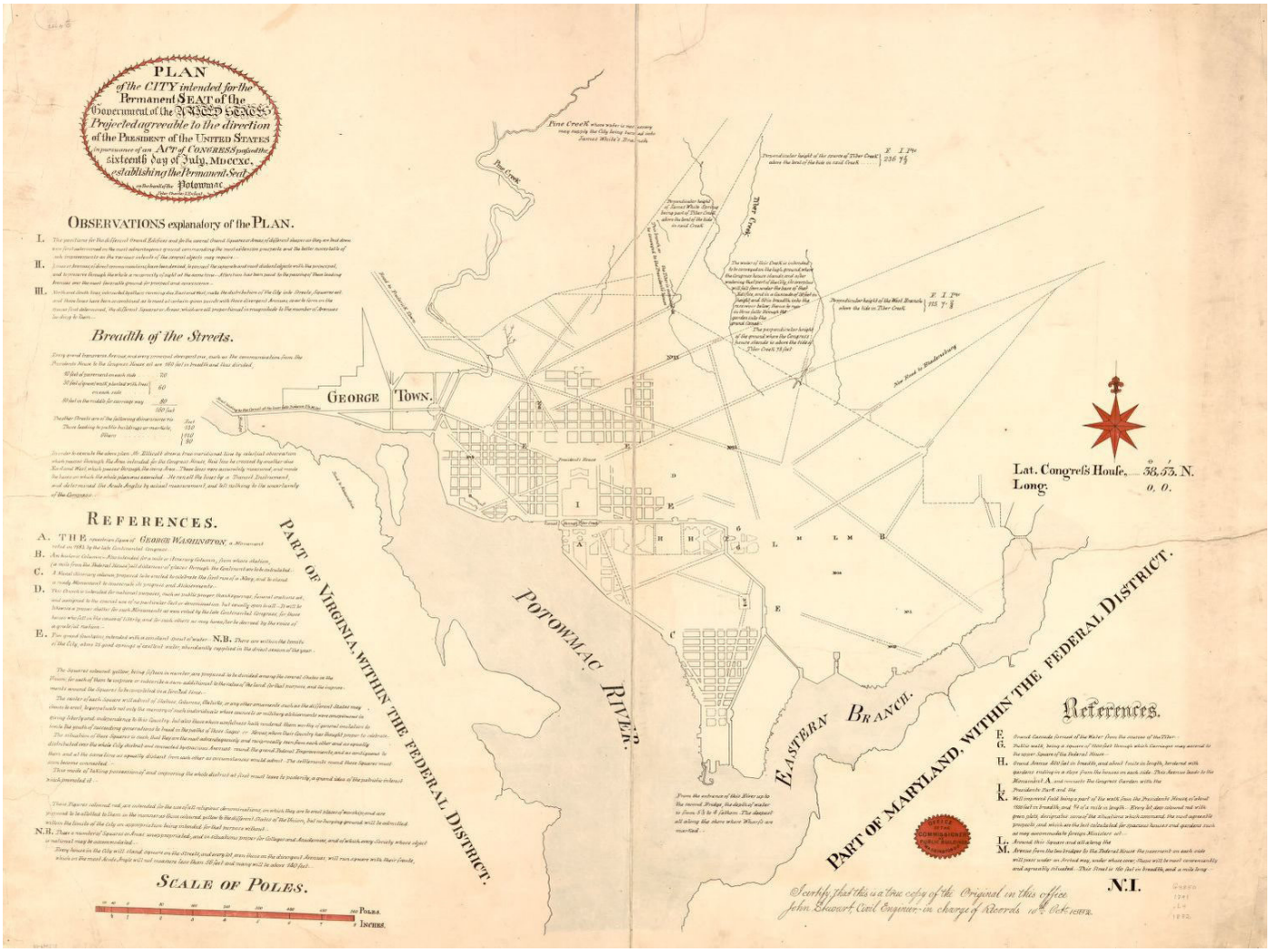

Fig. 4.2

Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
1882, facsimile (tracing)
Office of the Commissioner of Public Buildings,
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.
https://lccn.loc.gov/88694202

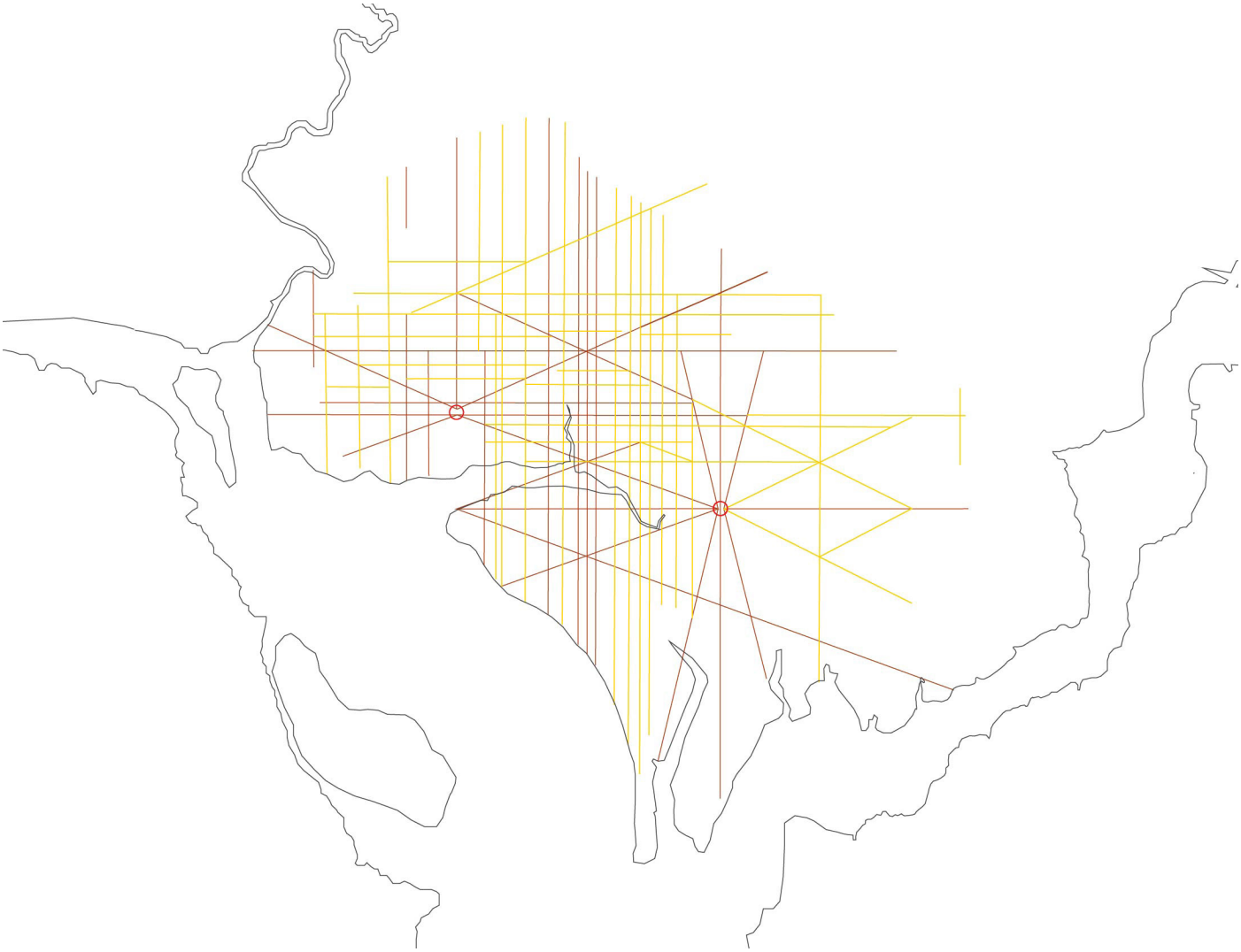

Fig. 4.3

Extraction of red and yellow survey lines from the 'Dotted line' plan.

According to the annotation, the red lines indicate avenues already laid out and the yellow, those that were projected but not established. There is disagreement over the date and authorship of this drawing as it shows the later version of the location of Massachusetts avenue which rationalised much of the L'Enfant network of avenues and public spaces. Nevertheless the arteries shown in red indicate an order of priority with in the plan and places a greater emphasis on the central spine of the plan at what is now 8th St.

Plan of 16 July 1791/ 19 August 1791 (The L'Enfant plan)
Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States : projected agreeable to the direction of the President of the United States, in pursuance of an act of Congress, passed on the sixteenth day of July, MDCCXC, "establishing the permanent seat on the bank of the Potowmac": [Washington, D.C.][6]

(Location: Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 70 x 81 cm., on sheet 73 x 104 cm)

This is the only copy of L'Enfant's original detailed plan drawing. The plan was mounted on cloth and eventually varnished to preserve it from decay (Fig.0.2). The effect was to obscure the detail of the drawing and much of the document became illegible early in its history. There are several enhanced copies and facsimiles which have made the analysis of its detail possible. A digitised monochrome version was produced by the Library of Congress in 1991 and this provides the clearest record of the plan (Fig.4.1). A previous tracing of the plan was taken in in 1882 (see Fig.4.2) and several facsimiles extrapolated from this image in 1887 (see figs 0.1 & 0.4). These versions suggest several layers of interpretation particularly around the detail of what is now the Mall. More importantly, there are several differences between this draft of the plan and the engraving produced by Andrew Ellicott a year later.

The dotted line plan (assumed 19 August 1791)
(Location: Map, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 68 x 106 cm.)
The 'map of dotted lines'(Fig.0.3) is believed to be that which was included in Pierre L'Enfant's report to George Washington on 19 August 1791 as evidence of the project's progress, [7] although this is disputed.[8] The drawing contains one note that identifies the areas of the survey that had been completed. In the report L'Enfant complains that a 'chaos of felled timber' was standing in the way of his survey and it is impossible to determine whether this practical hurdle determined the focus for the map, or whether the lines it maps out indicate the planner's priorities. The two focal points for the plan, the

[6] L'Enfant, Pierre Charles, and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings. *Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of the United States: projected agreeable to the direction of the President of the United States, in pursuance of an act of Congress, passed on the sixteenth day of July, MDCCXC, "establishing the permanent seat on the bank of the Potowmac": Washington D.C.* [1791] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/88694205/.
[7] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."
[8] Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City."

White House and Capitol are not included although they are obvious from the convergence of streets and avenues. It is most likely that the dotted line plan described the extent of the survey that had been completed, indicated by red lines, and the ones yet to be measured out - the yellow (Fig.4.3). The more detailed description may relate to the final plan for the city which is believed to have been produced at the same time and included as part of the August report. This final plan was made available Jefferson and Madison for review and was the subject of Jefferson's queries to the Commissioners of 28 August 1791.[9]

Report of 19 August 1791

In this report L'Enfant confirms to Washington that he has made the alterations 'agreeable to your direction.'[10] What this direction was is not clear as there is no record of written correspondence on the matter between June and August. On the 18th of August Jefferson wrote to L'Enfant noting that the 'President had understood for some time past that you were coming on to Philadelphia and New York, and therefore has delayed mentioning to you some matters which have occurred to him.'[11] He goes on to say that there had been some consideration of the laying out of lots, but no other detail is provided. Indeed, much of the report is focused on the sale of lots rather than the configuration of the plan itself.

However, L'Enfant indicates that the sites for the Federal House and the President's Palace had been determined. He writes of a grand avenue connecting the two buildings, a canal 'through the Tiber' and a 'grand walk from the water cascade under the federal House to the president park.'[12] The same sentence continues to describe 'several squares or area such as are Intended for the Judiciary court - the national bank - the grand church - the play House, market & exchange.'[13] The lack of consistent punctuation in L'Enfant's writing makes it difficult to determine whether he intended these additional institutions to populate the walk or to be laid out in the city at large. Given the problems of dating the L'Enfant plan, we must assume that the additional civic buildings and public spaces would be located similarly to how they are shown in the extant plan but

[9] Jefferson, "Queries for D. C. Commissioners, [ca. 28 August 1791]."
[10] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791."
[11] Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 18 August 1791."
[12] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 39.
[13] L'Enfant, 39.

they may have been configured in line with the 1792 engravings. There is evident consistency here with few obvious anomalies between the L'Enfant drawing and the description provided in the August report. If we are to regard the dotted line plan and subsequent, unauthorised engravings to reflect the changes requested by the President then these would include the straightening of Massachusetts avenue, the simplification or realignment of some of the secondary avenues, and the removal of one small public square.[14] These changes are significant but do not alter the core geometry, the orientation of primary avenues, or the distribution of open space.

The Ellicott Plan

Pierre L'Enfant neglected to provide his original drawing for the purpose of engraving after his relationship with the Commissioners deteriorated. Andrew Ellicott wrote to the Commissioners on 23 February 1792 to report that 'On my arrival at this City, I found no preparation was made for an engraving of the plan of the City of Washington.' He goes on to note that 'In this business we met with difficulties of a very serious nature. - Major L'Enfant refused us the use of the *Original*! What his motives were, God knows.' Ellicott claims that the plan that he and his brother completed was 'found to answer the ground better, than the large one in the Major's hands.'[15] As noted, the alterations are relatively minor but have a significant effect which will be detailed in the analysis provided below. Mention of the size of the L'Enfant's original drawing suggests that this is not the archived L'Enfant plan (70 x 81 cm). Ellicott's plan was engraved by Samuel Hill in February 1792 (the Boston Plan) (Fig.0.5) and by Thackara & Vallance Plans March 1792/ November 1792 (the Philadelphia Plan) (Fig.0.6). The two engravings vary in detail, but the geometric configuration of avenues and critical distances remain the same.

Dating the Plans

The Library of Congress record, and the National Archive, describe the L'Enfant plan as having been the drawing provided to George Washington in August 1791 and

[14] Partridge conducted an in-depth comparison of the two plans in 1930, overlaying the L'Enfant and Ellicott plans. Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning," 34.
[15] Goff, "Early Printing in Georgetown (Potomak), 1789-1800 and the Engraving of L'Enfant's Plan of Washington, 1792," 116.

reviewed by Jefferson and Madison on the 28th.[16] The timeline that this establishes then designates the Dotted line plan as a draft or sketch prepared in advance of the more detailed drawing. A review of the geometry of the 'Dotted line,' L'Enfant and Ellicott plans however, reveals anomalies in this sequence.

The survey lines indicated in the 'Dotted Line' plan do not correlate well with the available L'Enfant plan which would appear to support the theory that this was either the sketch provided to Washington in June rather than the final version included in the August report, or that the 'Dotted-line' plan was Ellicott's rather than L'Enfant's. A simple overlay of the 'map of dotted lines', the L'Enfant plan and the subsequent engraving completed by Andrew Ellicott show much greater consistency with the latter. The primary avenues indicated in the Dotted line map correlate with the Ellicott interpretation contained in the Hill as well as the Thackara and Vallance engravings with only minor variation. Both show a straightened Massachusetts avenue unlike the facetted version drawn in the L'Enfant plan (Fig.4.4). The realignment of this critical thoroughfare that was to run between the settlement at Georgetown and the established crossing of the Eastern Branch was significant and its presence in both the 'Dotted line' survey and the later Ellicott version provides convincing evidence that the L'Enfant plan preceded both and was likely to be a later version of the plan referred to in the June Report.

The photographic analysis of the manuscript and J.L.S.Jennings' close examination of the material seems to support this reading.[17] While Jennings suggests that the archived plan was a copy of the larger original, the latter being kept safe at his lodgings, the scratchings out and surface damage to the drawings would indicate a working draft. Given that the work was dated 16 July 1791 and L'Enfant had supplied the President with a draft only three weeks earlier, it is plausible that this version was detailed working draft rather than the presentation copy mentioned in the August report (dated a month later than the drawing).

Furthermore, L'Enfant's reference to the June plan's small size is supported by the scale of the L'Enfant plan, measuring only 70 x 81 cm. The plan depicted in the Savage

[16] Jefferson, "Queries for D. C. Commissioners, [ca. 28 August 1791]."
[17] Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City."

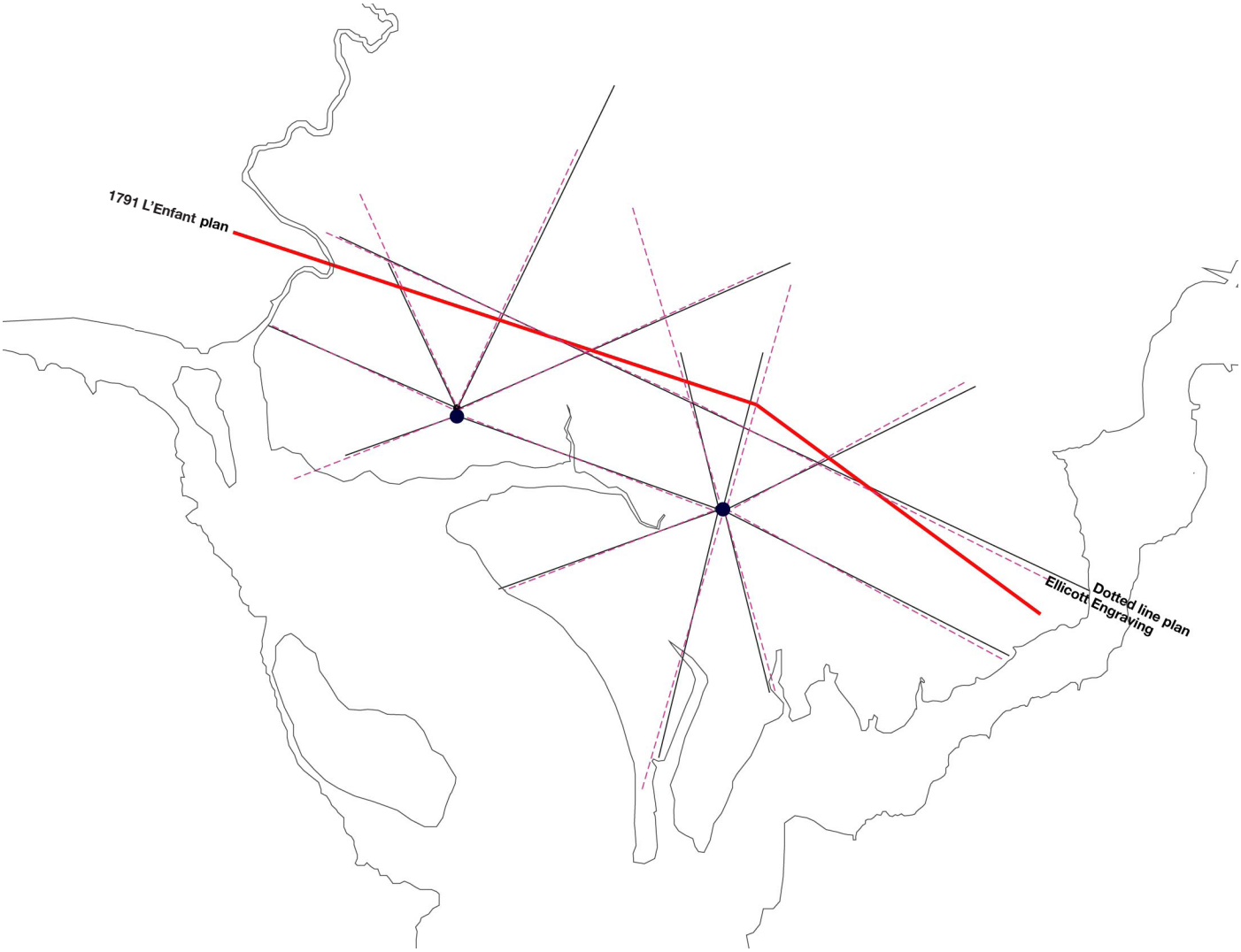

Fig. 4.4

Variation between L'Enfant, 'Dotted lines', and Ellicott versions

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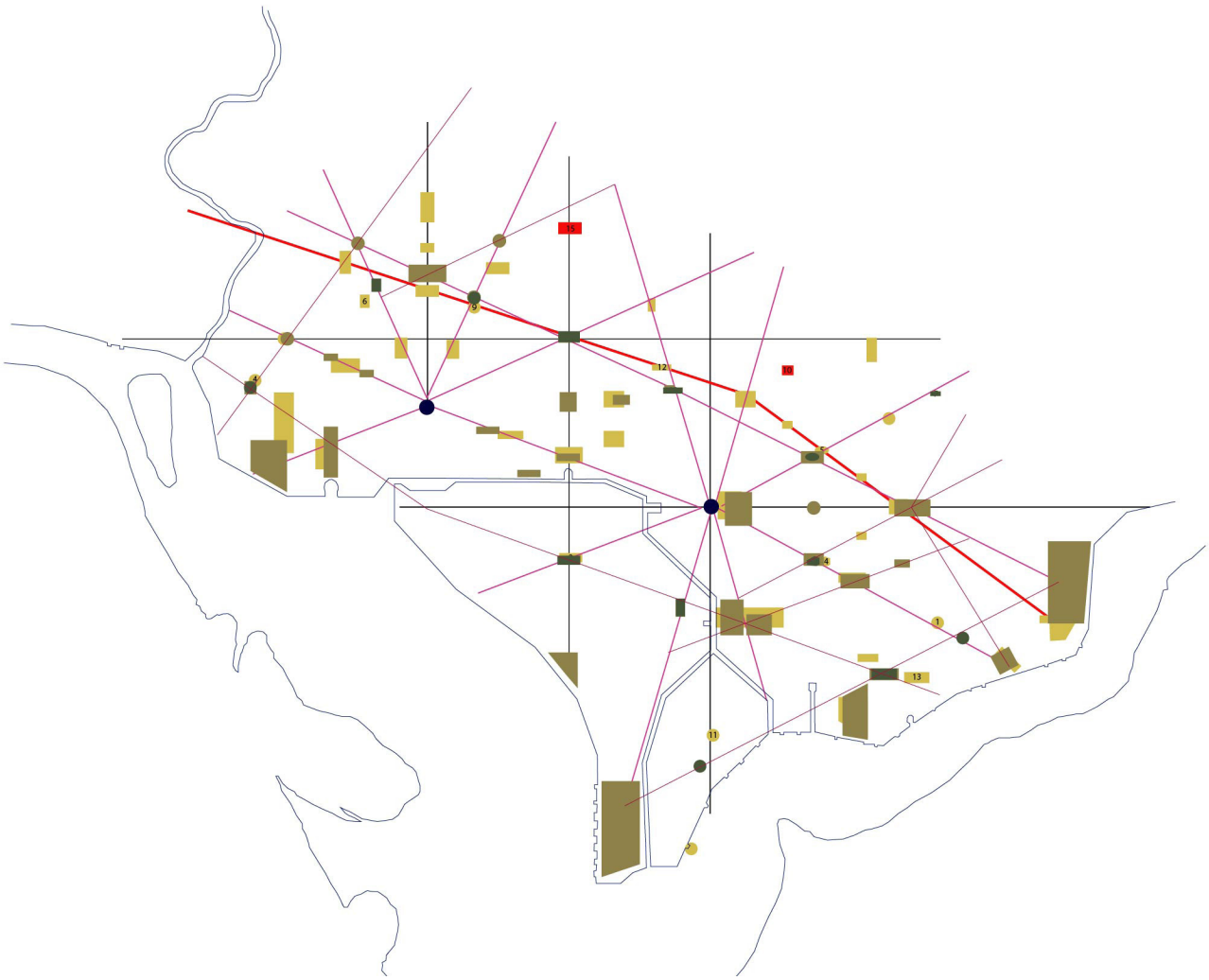

Fig. 4.5

Comparison of location of open spaces in L'Enfant and Ellicott versions.

dark yellow = L'Enfant space
dark green = Ellicott spaces
red = number 'state' squares removed by Ellicott

The overlay of the two versions demonstrates the simplification of the plan in the Ellicott version, a reduction in the number of small public spaces. However it suggests an attemot to retain the substantial direction of the original design while rationalising its detail.

(Author)

portrait of George Washington and his family is roughly double this size and does not include the notes and references of the L'Enfant plan. The painting does not provide reliable evidence and may have been a fictive interpretation, however it goes some way to supporting an alternative interpretation of the timeline. This would suggest that it is the August plan that is missing from the record and that its content is better represented by the subsequent engraved editions than the original L'Enfant plan despite L'Enfant's disavowal of these versions. The analysis that follows in Chapter 5 makes use of both.

For the purposes of the analysis provided here and in the following chapter, the establishment of an adjusted dating of the available drawings is critical in very particular ways and irrelevant in others. Firstly, the arrangement and geometry of most of the primary avenues that structure the city remain the same in all three versions. Conversely, the adjustment of Massachusetts avenue is reflected in the placement of public squares and these differ between the L'Enfant plan and the Ellicott versions (Fig.4.5). Ellicott's interpretation reduces the frequency of public spaces and simplifies the detail of the outskirts of the city significantly; the new position of Massachusetts avenue crosses Tyber (now Rock) Creek awkwardly rather than at its natural bend as shown in the L'Enfant plan; and the public realm of the Ellicott plan is more concentrated, and the number of state squares reduced. These alterations rationalise the layout significantly and reduce the number of irregular plots (Fig.4.5). Given L'Enfant's emphasis on the sale of lots in the August report, some of these changes may have been initiated by him and reflected in the missing plan. The effect of these changes, however, is drastic, Ellicott's rationalisation of L'Enfant's small pockets of public space make them bleed together creating the vast undulating avenues that characterise the current city (Fig.4.6, 4.7).

The third focus for this analysis is the larger public spaces at the centre of the city. The location and approximate size of these large plazas and the 'grand' avenues are similarly placed in the L'Enfant and Ellicott versions. The spaces blocked out in the 'Dotted line' plan reflect both plans in relatively equal degrees and emphasise areas other than those surrounding the White House and Capitol buildings. However difficult to interpret, these blocks of space help to draw particular attention to the key non-institutional public spaces that were to structure the city.

Plan Analysis

The subtleties of variation between editions and copies of the plan and the relative deterioration of the available material makes an accurate comparison challenging. The position of the White House and Capital buildings remain consistent however and provide two datum points to align historic and contemporary maps. The following analysis uses these two points, and the edges of the Potomac River banks, as mapped in the late eighteenth century, to provide a consistent base for the subsequent diagrammatic review of the plans. Having plotted the locations of the White House and Capitol it is then possible to identify primary, secondary and tertiary angles, and to use these to compare the 'Dotted line' plan and final L'Enfant plan.

Previous Analysis

Little recent analysis of these drawings has been conducted and most of the discourse regarding L'Enfant's plan builds upon work conducted in the early part of the twentieth century during the development of the McMillan plan, which fundamentally altered the order of monumental core. The significant contributions to such a reading of the plan are that of William T Partridge who attempted to reconstruct the processes by which L'Enfant set out the city,[18] and Elbert Peets' 1928 study of the plan's debt to the formal arrangement of Versailles and John Evelyn's London.[19] These two positions, one using the deduction of process as evidence of the plan's originality, and the other looking to the examples made available to L'Enfant as the sources for his work, both contribute to our understanding of the 1791 plan but overlook the compatibility of their positions or the influence of other concurrent trends in urban planning.

The Primary Organisation of Avenues

As with the location of the President's Palace and Capitol building, the laying out of avenues and the secondary public spaces at their intersection, are keyed both to the wider topography and to the internal logic of the geometry of the plan. Neither the topography nor the geometry are regular or obvious. Other than the importance of the extent of the Potomac River detailed in the previous section, the profile of the adjacent landscape was gentle and expansive, and the distribution of the plan difficult to

[18] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."
[19] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.

summarise despite Partridge's own attempts to derive a larger regular order for the city.[20]

By contrast, the direction of L'Enfant's avenues rarely repeats, and the grid that is superimposed modulates to suggest a highly diverse urban grain. In many respects, this plan is indeed as unique as Partridge suggests however, while L'Enfant may not have borrowed directly from existing precedent, his work clearly stems from a common understanding of survey and planning techniques that he may have either learnt at the *Academie*, in the field of battle, or through a familiarity with the spatial character of late eighteenth-century urban development in Paris. Such an understanding is recognisable and can contribute to speculation as to the character of space L'Enfant might have envisaged, and its adoption or rejection of representational urban devices related to specific uses, and socio-political hierarchies. In this respect a review of his plausible method and a close examination of the spatial characteristics that emerged as a result, can, it is argued, suggest a relationship between his idea of the city, and its representational value as a nation's capital and Federal District, both locally and abroad.

The position of the Capitol and White House and their relationship to the district boundary and surrounding topography were discussed in the previous chapter. These anchor buildings established the primary geometry of the plan. William Partridge put forward a substantially different interpretation in 1930.[21] He determined that the framework of the plan was defined by a grid of streets and the radiating avenues drawn between them to achieve the 'reciprocity of sight' and 'making the real distance less from place to place'[22] The primacy of the grid is supported in part by L'Enfant's own description as he writes in his June report, 'having first determined some principal points to which I wished making the rest subordinate I next made the distribution regular with streets at right angle north-south and east west but afterwards I opened others on various directions as avenues to and from every principal places.'[23] The claims are confusing however, as mapping the primary spaces of the plan, those detailed

[20] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."
[21] Partridge.
[22] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 33.
[23] L'Enfant, 33.

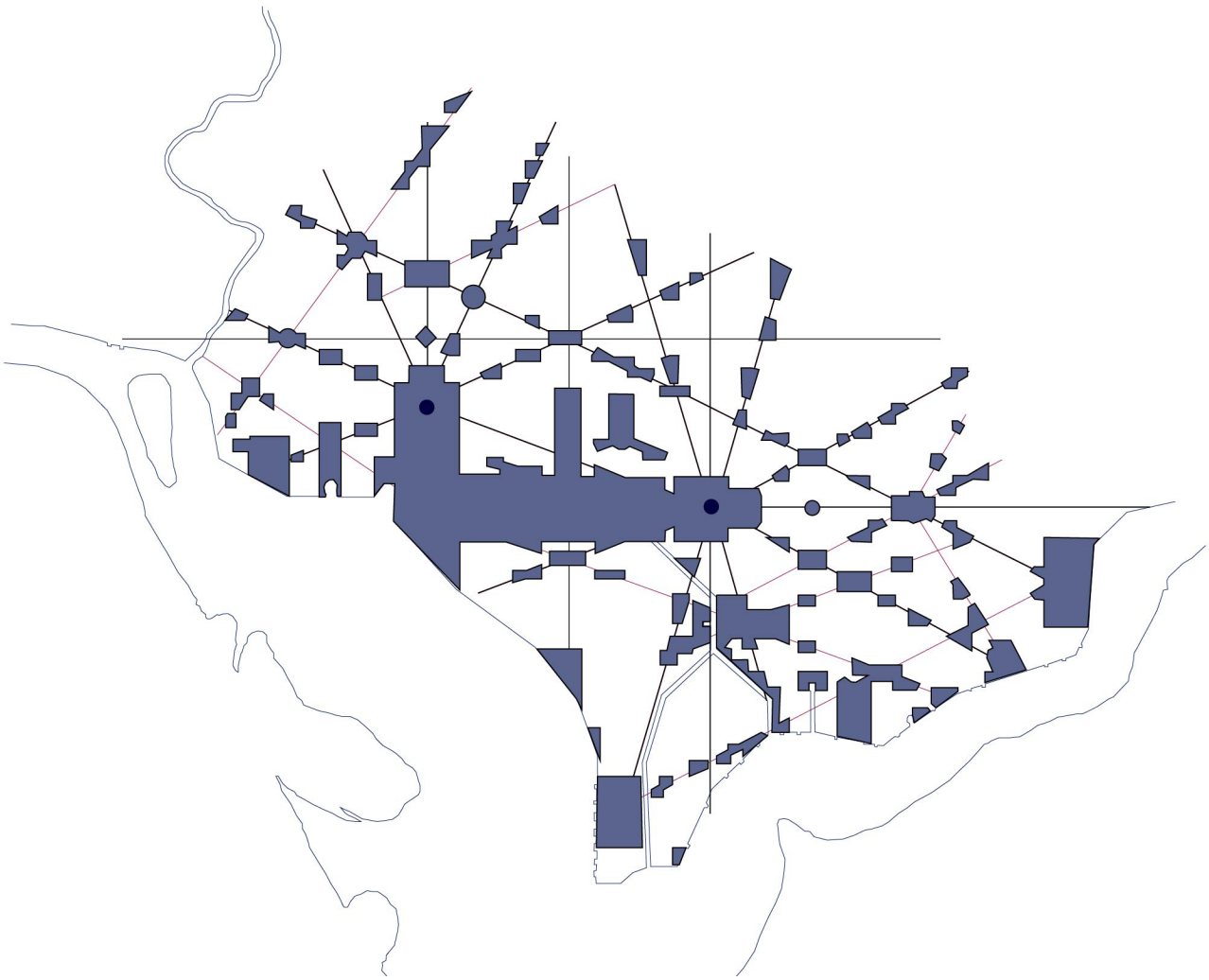

Fig. 4.6

Tracing of all open spaces in Ellicott Plan

The Ellicott version of the plan amalgamated smaller open spaces and incorporated them into the line of primary avenues. The effect has been the widening of these arteries and the elimination of the majority of the smaller spaces that were to form the heart of state neighbourhoods as envisaged by L'Enfant. It has also created the extensive broad avenues that characterise the contemporary city.

(Author)

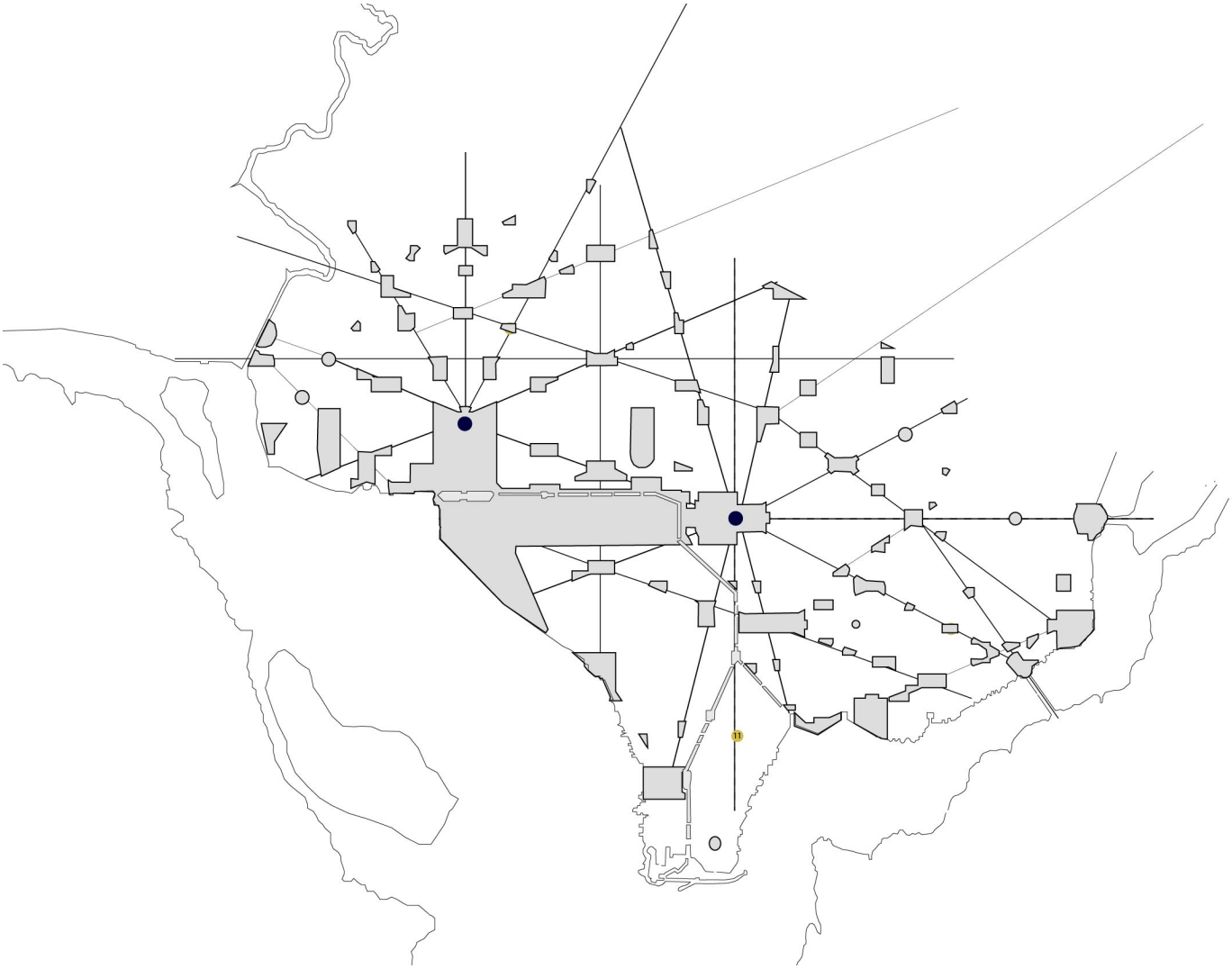

Fig. 4.7

Tracing of all open spaces in L'Enfant Plan

The distribution of smaller public spaces is notable here as they are located less uniformly and within spaces offset from main thoroughfares.

(Author)

in the notes to the L'Enfant plan, does not suggest any form of vertical or horizontal regularity (Fig.4.8) despite Partridge's careful work to demonstrate otherwise.[24]

Most importantly, tracing Partridge's grid onto the L'Enfant plan and the Ellicott revision does not produce a regular interval or discernible logic. The available plans thus suggest a simpler initial organisation. L'Enfant located the White House and Capitol in response to the existing topography and the district boundary as detailed in the previous chapter. As noted, the relationship between the axes established by these two points is highly specific. L'Enfant may then have drafted an additional vertical halfway between the two branches of government that would form a central artery through the city at what is now 8th St NW. This street is also emphasised in the 'Dotted line' plan and anchors several important city institutions described in the L'Enfant plan (Fig.4.9). It is apparent that the remaining framework is then determined by the principal avenue between the White House and Capitol along the line of what is now Pennsylvania Avenue, distances derived from the orthogonal relationship between the two main institutions, and an orientation to more distant nodes that structure the district. The location of additional buildings and monuments that are described in the reports and the L'Enfant plan are secondary to this primary order as is the structure of the grid composing individual plots.

According to this interpretation, the plan is determined first by the relationship between the White House, the Capitol, the district boundary and the existing topography, secondly by a geometry derived from these positions which enabled L'Enfant to create an armature of nine primary avenues, and array of secondary arteries, and thirdly by the rhythm of public spaces positioned along this framework.

The starting point for this system, Pennsylvania Avenue, is mirrored only twice to form the southern legs of New York and Maryland Avenues, both of which have largely disappeared from the contemporary city (Fig.4.10). These arteries are oriented towards the Southern trajectory of the Potomac in the case of the White House, and towards the West and the public walk from the Capitol. These two axes reinforce the primacy of the river orientation and the outlook of the President, as well as the critical importance of

[24] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning"; Helfrich, "'Beloved Ancien': William T. Partridge's Recollections of the Senate Park Commission and the Subsequent Mall Development."

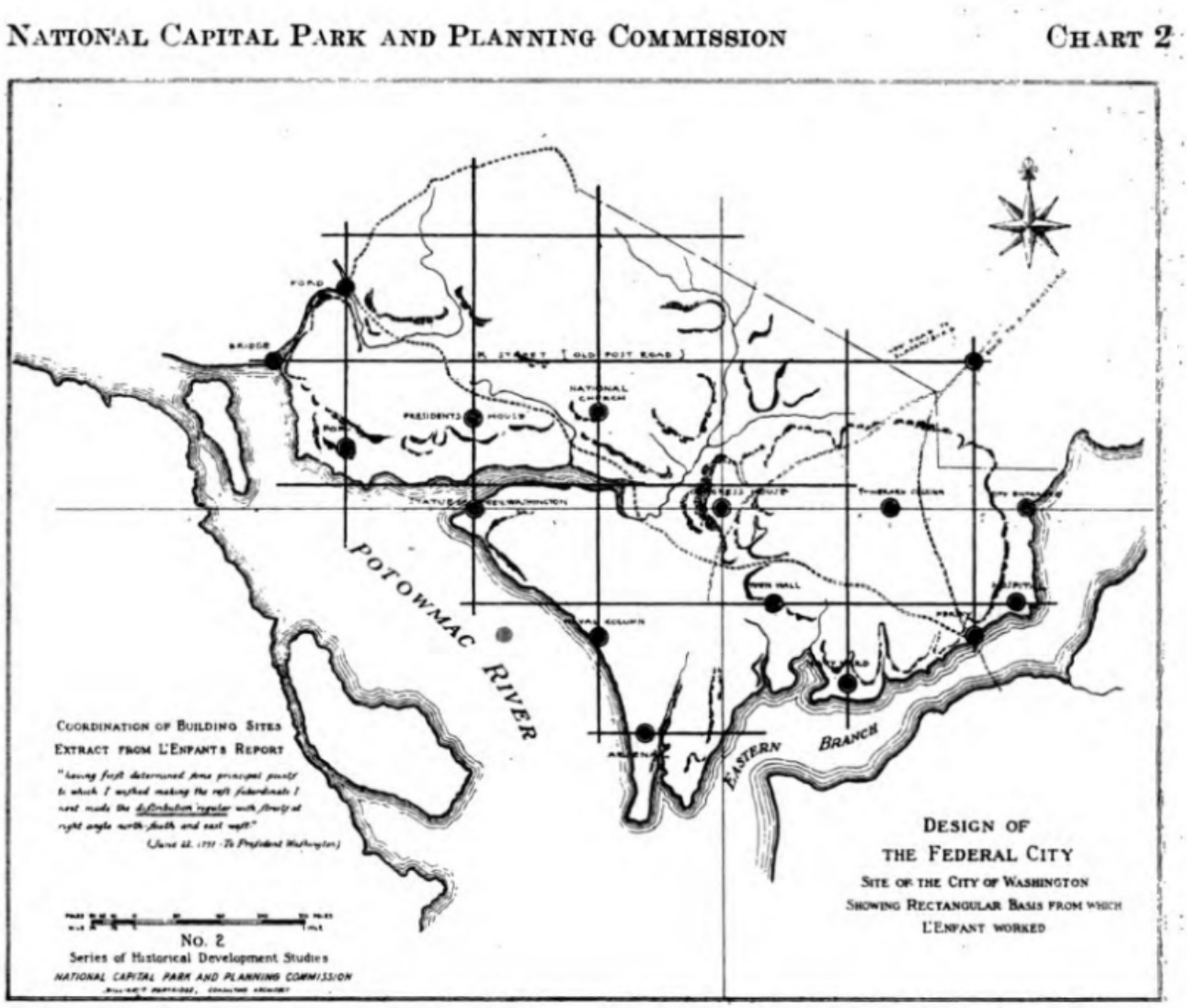

Fig. 4.8

Partridge p. 29

William T Partridge, Studies in Continuity of Planning." In Reports and Plans, Washington Region: Supplementary Technical Data to Accompany Annual Report, by National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 21-38 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1930.)

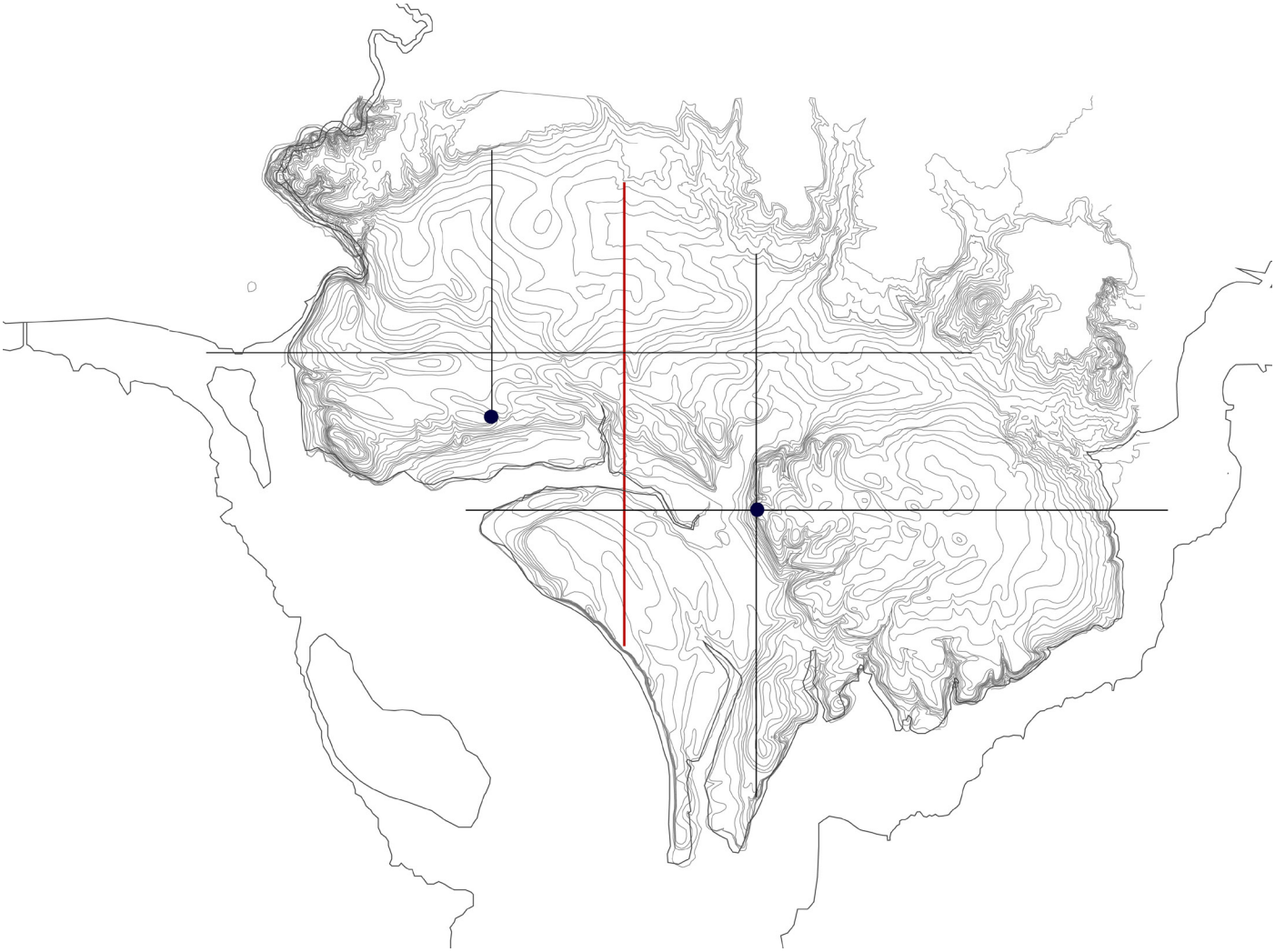

Fig. 4.9

8th St spine

(Author)

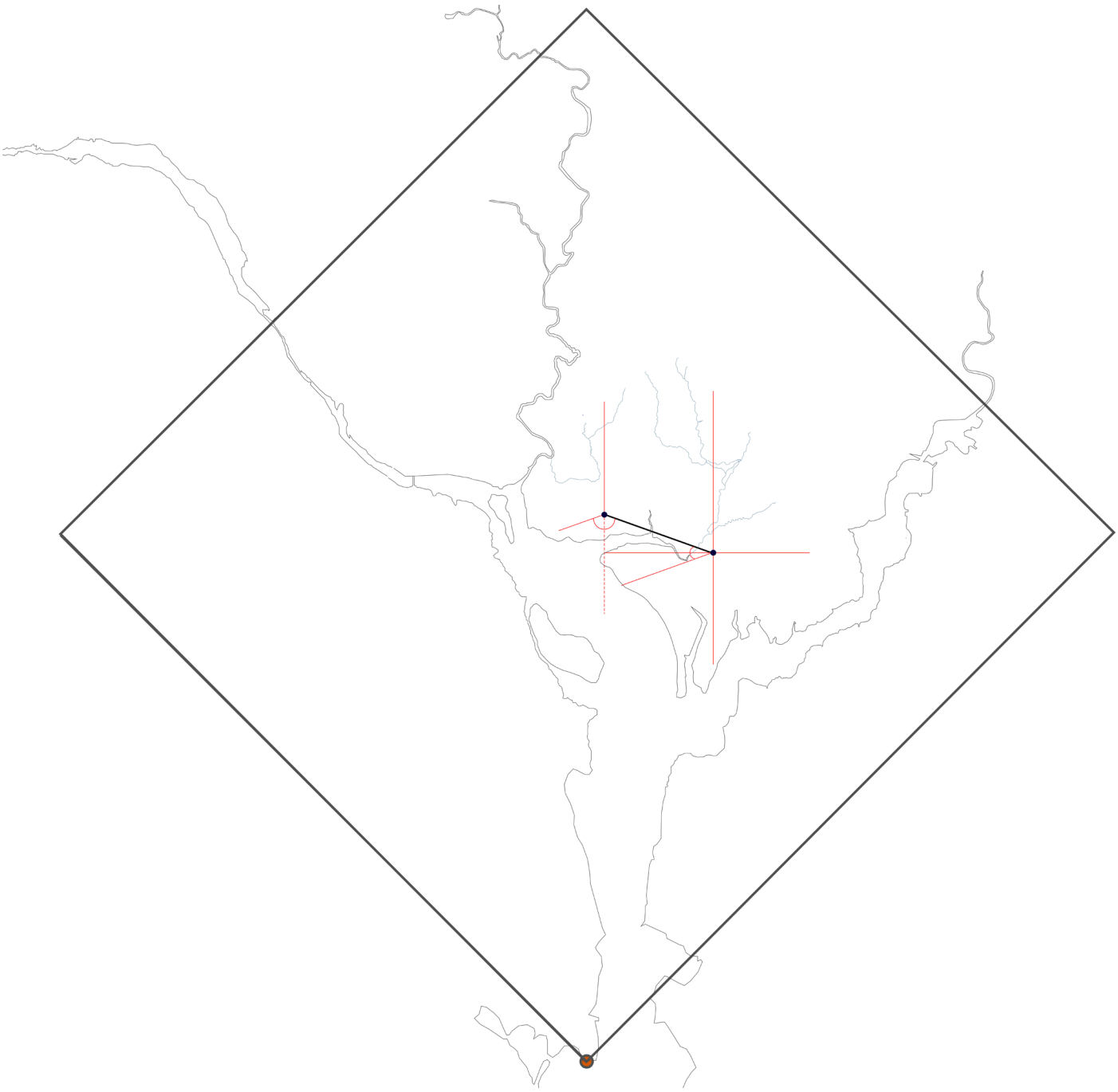

Fig. 4.10

Primary Diagonal angle established between Capitol and White House

Mirroring and bifurcation are limited within the plan but both of these primary avenues split symmetrically across the axes of the White House and Capitol.

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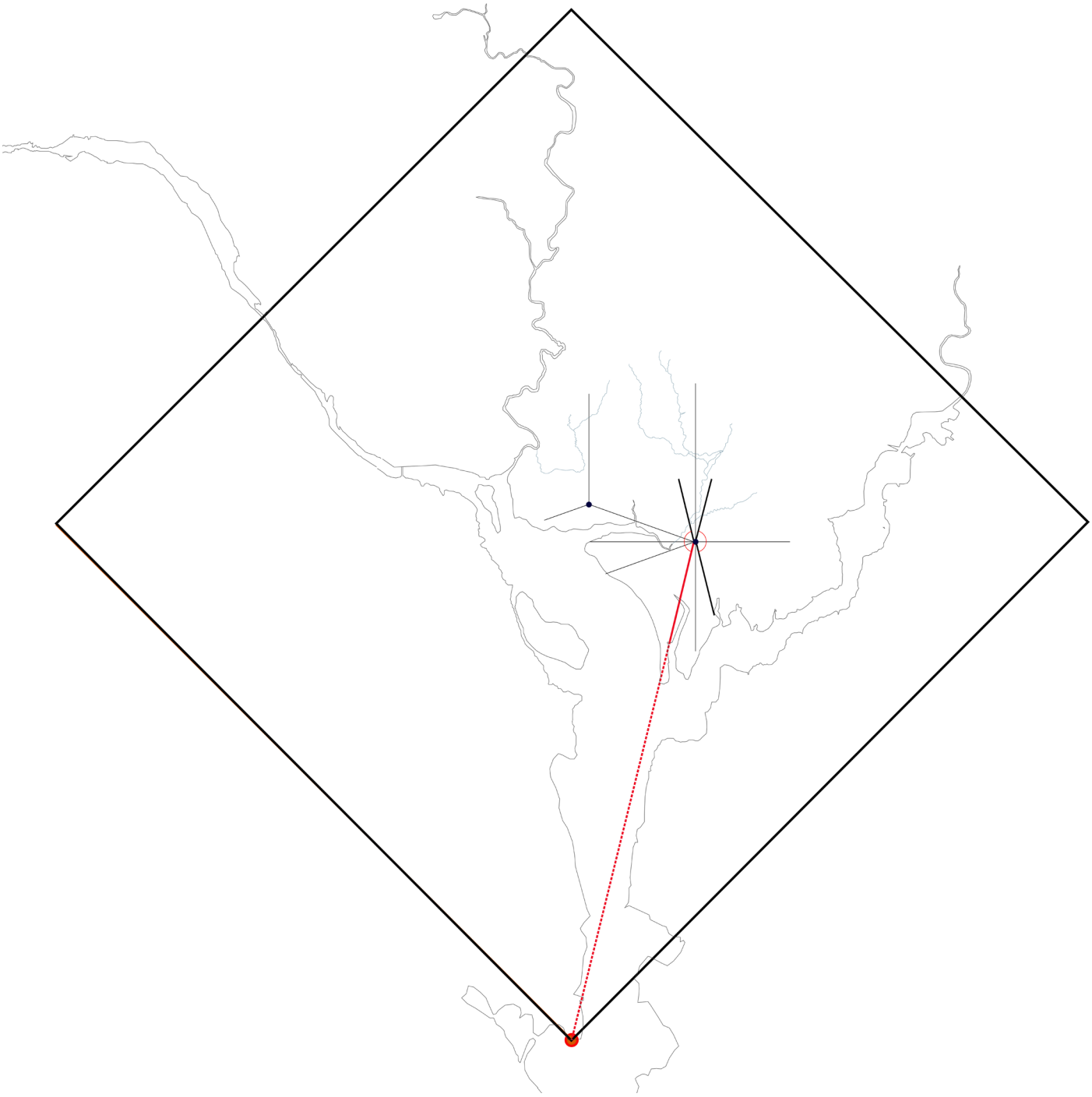

Fig. 4.11

Orientation to district boundary

The second layer of duplication occurs around the Capitol location. This would appear to be set out in line with the position of the first boundary stone at Jones Point.

(Author)

the inland frontier toward the West for the Seat of Congress. Partridge's analysis points to the direction of the subsequent avenues being determined by their 'objectives'[25] radiating out from the primary foundational locations and coinciding with established roads and river crossings (Fig.3.12). This is true in part, and certainly goes some way to explaining the arbitrary nature of some of the geometry but overlooks a more subtle hierarchy within the plan.

There are only two occurrences in the 'Dotted line' plan where the angle of the avenues replicate, or mirror, more than once. These and the angle established by Pennsylvania Avenue are amongst the few that are also found unaltered in the Manuscript Plan. The first of these are Delaware and New Jersey Avenues, which bifurcate around the Capitol. Neither of these avenues are directed towards focal points within the city or aligned with existing byways, and so appear to diverge from Partridge's conclusions. While Delaware Avenue terminates in what would have been the city docks and the commercial heart of the city, this territory does not form a distinct focus for the geometry. However, when the layout of the city is placed against the plan of the wider district, it is apparent that this set of views are established by a long line-of-site from the terrace of the Capitol directly towards the foundation point of the district at the Cape of Great Hunting Creek (Fig.4.11). Here L'Enfant is tying the position of government to the geometry of the federal territory and so to the wider landscape. This hitherto unnoticed extended alignment and the offset position of the White House in relation to the boundary point described in the previous chapter orientate the primary institutions of the Federal City to the wider topography.

The continuation of both Pennsylvania and Maryland avenues east of the Capitol diverge from both this geometry and the primary angle determined by the Capitol and White House. The angle of the two eastern branches is formed by a line travelling between the corners of a two-to-one ratio rectangle of space – the primary dimension established between the north-to-south distance between the two anchor buildings (Fig.4.12). This angle is consistent across the three articulations of the plan, the 'map of dotted lines,' L'Enfant's plan and the Ellicott engraving. It is rationalised by the later version of Massachusetts avenue which in turn revises the logic of Eastern legs of Pennsylvania and New York Avenues. This stretch then sets the line of New York Ave

[25] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning," 31.

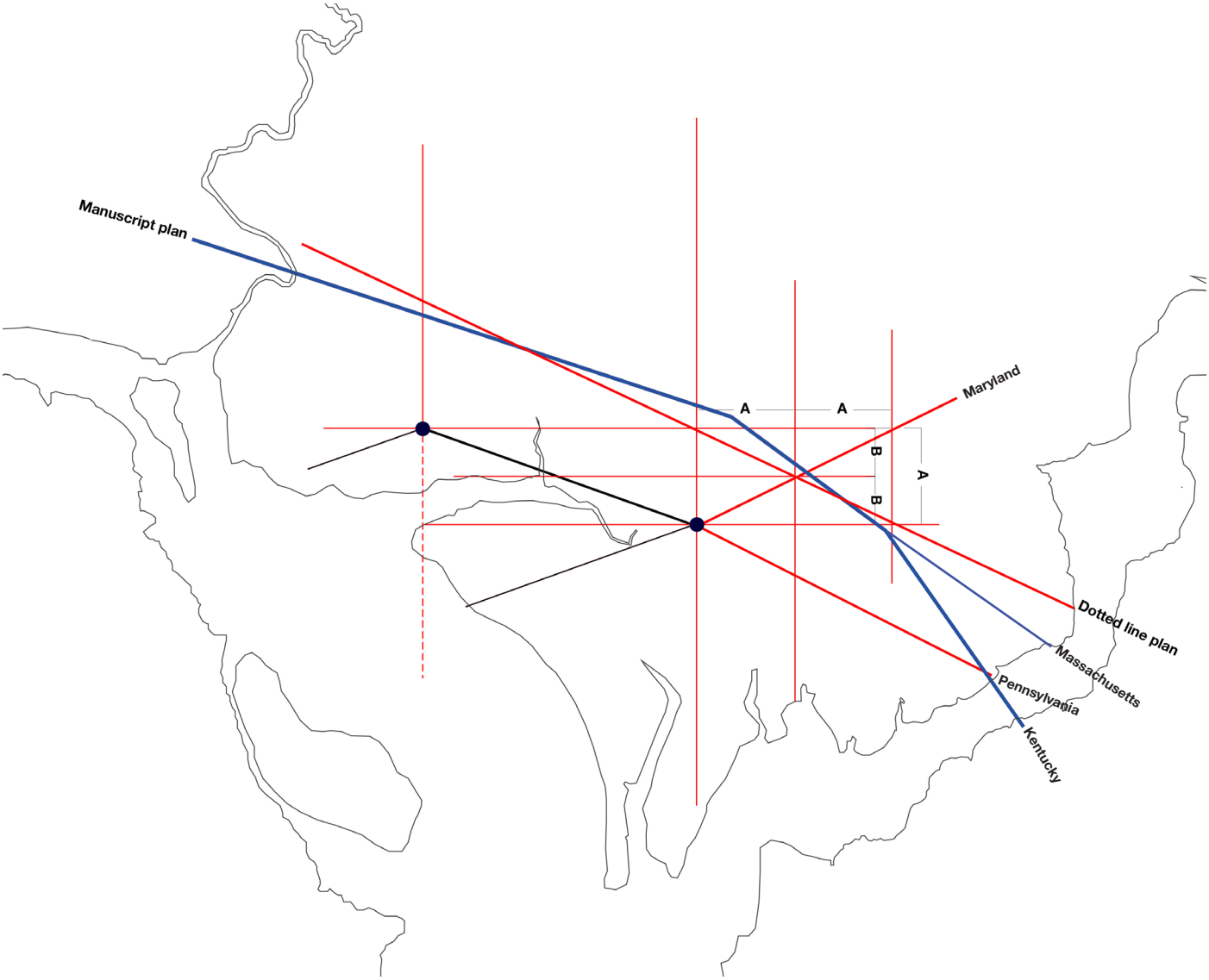

Fig. 4.12

Proportional geometry

The Ellicott and 'Dotted line' plans derive the crossings of avenues from a simple geometric halving of the orthoganl relaiopnship beween the promary nodes of the plan- the Whute House and Capitol. However the alternative line of L'Enfant's Massachusetts avenue avoids the clarity of this logic. By contracts, the springing points and intersections of avenues are keyed to the corners of open spaces so that the vanishing points are located at the edges rather than the centres of these spaces. See also Fig. 4.14.

(Author)

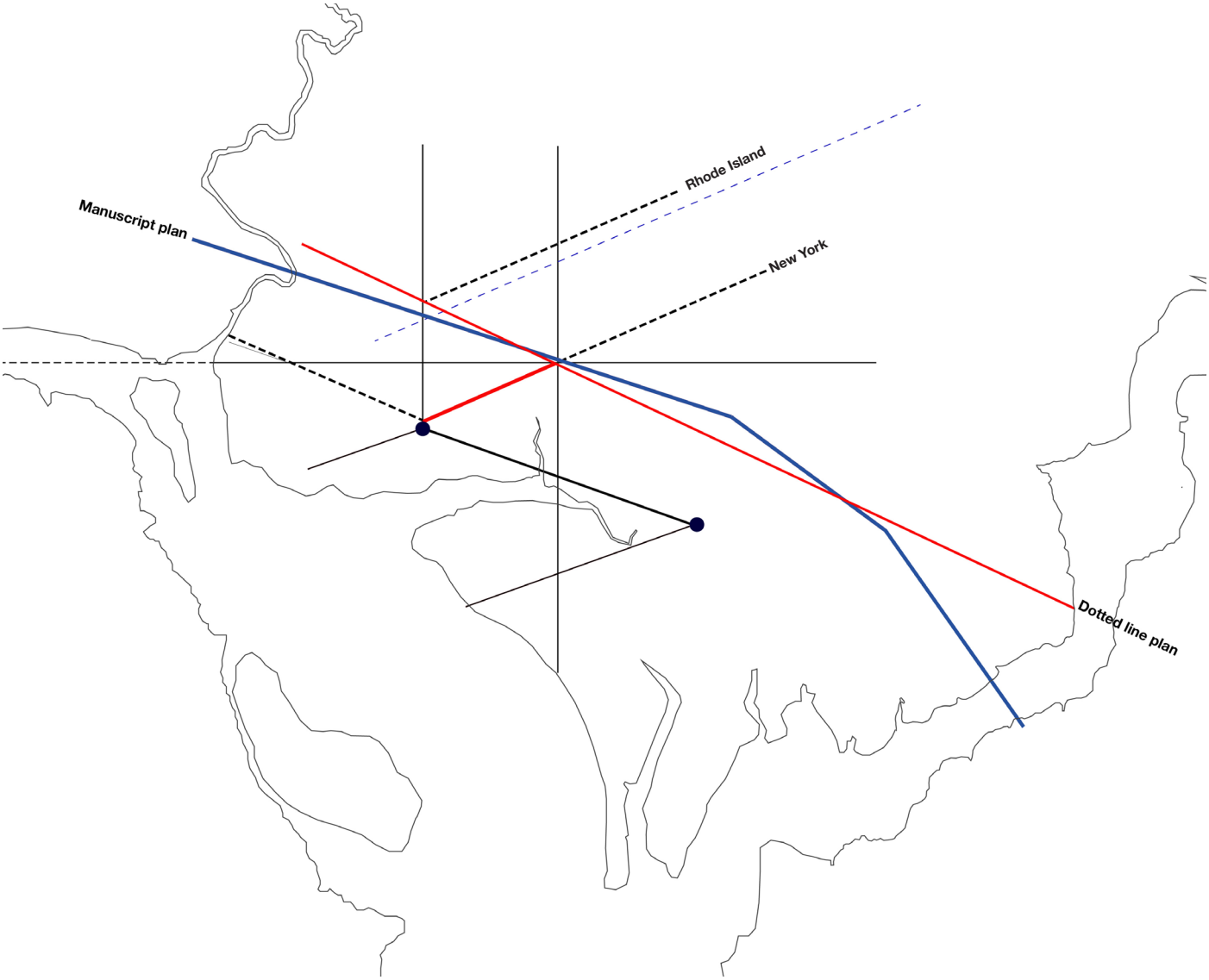

Fig. 4.13

8th St and Massachusetts Ave bifurcation

The area north of the White House is far more regular and consistent than that to the east. The angle of Rhode Island and New York Avenues are established by the intersection of 8th Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

(Author)

north of the White House, the parallel Rhode Island Ave and the western leg of Pennsylvania Ave (Fig.4.13).

The later position of Massachusetts avenue creates an important moment of additional mirroring and replication at its intersection with the main vertical urban axis of 8th Street NW at what is now the Carnegie Library. The point was to be marked by one of L'Enfant's larger state squares and established a central spine through the city that was to hold was to hold a national non-denominational church (Pantheon), one of the five large fountains as it met the Tiber Creek canal (Fig.4.14), the possible location of a Main Central Market (according to Elbert Peets), and a 'Naval itinerary column' at its southern tip. The avenues reflected around this point, lying equidistant from those formed by the White House and Capital, establish the key proportions of the centre of the city. The primary intersection also coincides with the east-west axis of K Street NW– a main street that would have formed a waterfront at Georgetown and a ceremonial route into the city. In this respect the formal symbolic order of the city is established by a relationship to distant points of reference while the structure of the lived city is determined by a more geometric distribution of space. This latter mechanism adheres to L'Enfant's ambitions to knit pockets of the settlement together to allow separate centres to grow simultaneously while being linked by a consistent 'reciprocity of sight.'[26] Here there is an apparent attempt to weave an urban order together with the orientation to landscape inherent in the primary structure of the plan. This differs substantially from other examples of planned American towns and cities such as Savannah, which was laid out at low-density, punctuated by regular open spaces within a rectilinear grid. The L'Enfant plan, by contrast, modulated between a diverse arrangement of local and formal public spaces and a wider orientation to the distant landscape.

Ceremonial Space

The network of avenues that structure the Federal City form an armature for its ceremonial spaces and settings for monuments and institutional buildings. The programme and location for these are laid out in the L'Enfant plan and its annotations.

[26] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."

L'Enfant's reports to George Washington on 22 June and 19 August 1791 provide moments of insight into the scope of the public programme and the character of the core of the city, but these details are articulated as a means to increase land value, 'combined to command the height price in a sale' as much as they are expressed as a grand vision for a new city 'unparalleled in point of beauties.'[27] *The OBSERVATIONS Explanatory of the PLAN* which accompany the L'Enfant Plan are then structured in three main sections, the first, I,II & III, outline the logic of the plan, the rationale behind the placement of 'Grand Edifices,' the arrangement of avenues, and the creation of the block structure and public squares in relation to the convergence of avenues. The second section describes the breadth of primary, secondary and tertiary streets. And the third section details in letters A-M (excluding J), the specific character of what could be classed as the public realm and monumental order of the city. A substantial portion of the lower left-hand area of the plan is then dedicated to a more detail explanation of the character and arrangement of secondary, state squares in the city, the distribution of religious and academic institutions, and the nature of the city's street frontage. In many respects these notes provide the most substantial explanation of L'Enfant's vision, for the plan itself in the condition it is found, is full of distortion and ambiguity (Figs.4.24, 4.25)

These *References* on the 1791 plan refer to several varieties of public space, those occupied by monuments, columns and fountains that would structure the celebratory and ceremonial life of the city, those associated with new, as yet undesignated academic, religious and civic institutions, and the fifteen squares reserved for the States. Beyond these L'Enfant provides additional description of the President's park 'I' and 'K' (and equestrian statue 'A'), the Grand Avenue (H) leading to Congress, and the public walk 'G' and cascade 'F' descending from the Capitol building (Fig 4.15). This grand avenue was one part of a wider setting for the institutional life of the new Federal City and has since become home to the museums and monuments of the National Mall. However, a close examination of the L'Enfant plan and the Hill (Fig.4.16) and Thackara & Vallance (Fig.4.17) engravings suggests that such a swathe of green is antithetical to L'Enfant's intentions, rooted as he was in a quite different and more highly differentiated experience of the ceremonial city to that of his City Beautiful inheritors.

[27] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 40.

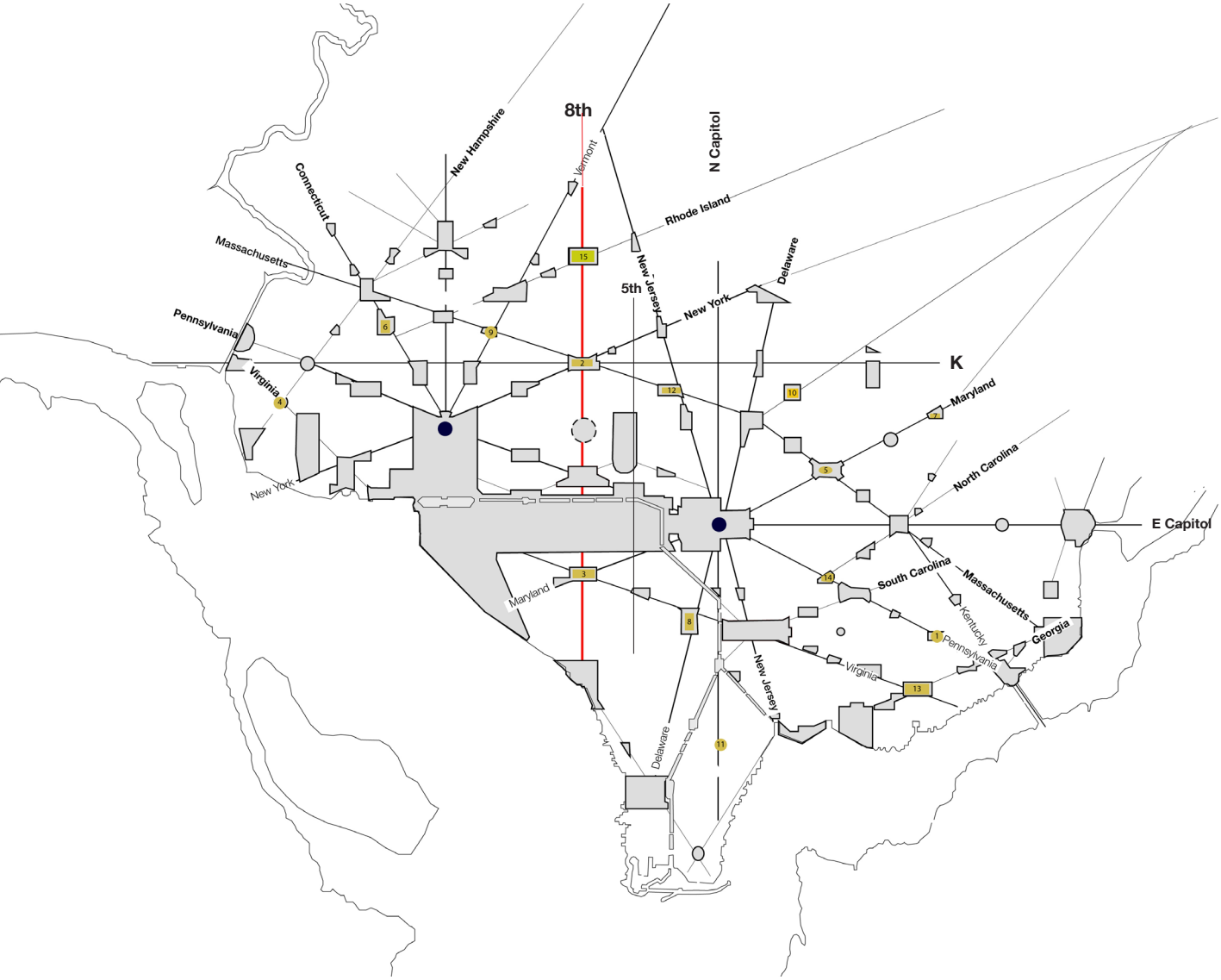

Fig. 4.14

Avenues and key named public spaces

(Author)

Fig. 4.15

Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States
DETAIL

Pierre Charles L'Enfant,
1887, facsimile (with colour)
United States Coast and Geodetic Survey
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

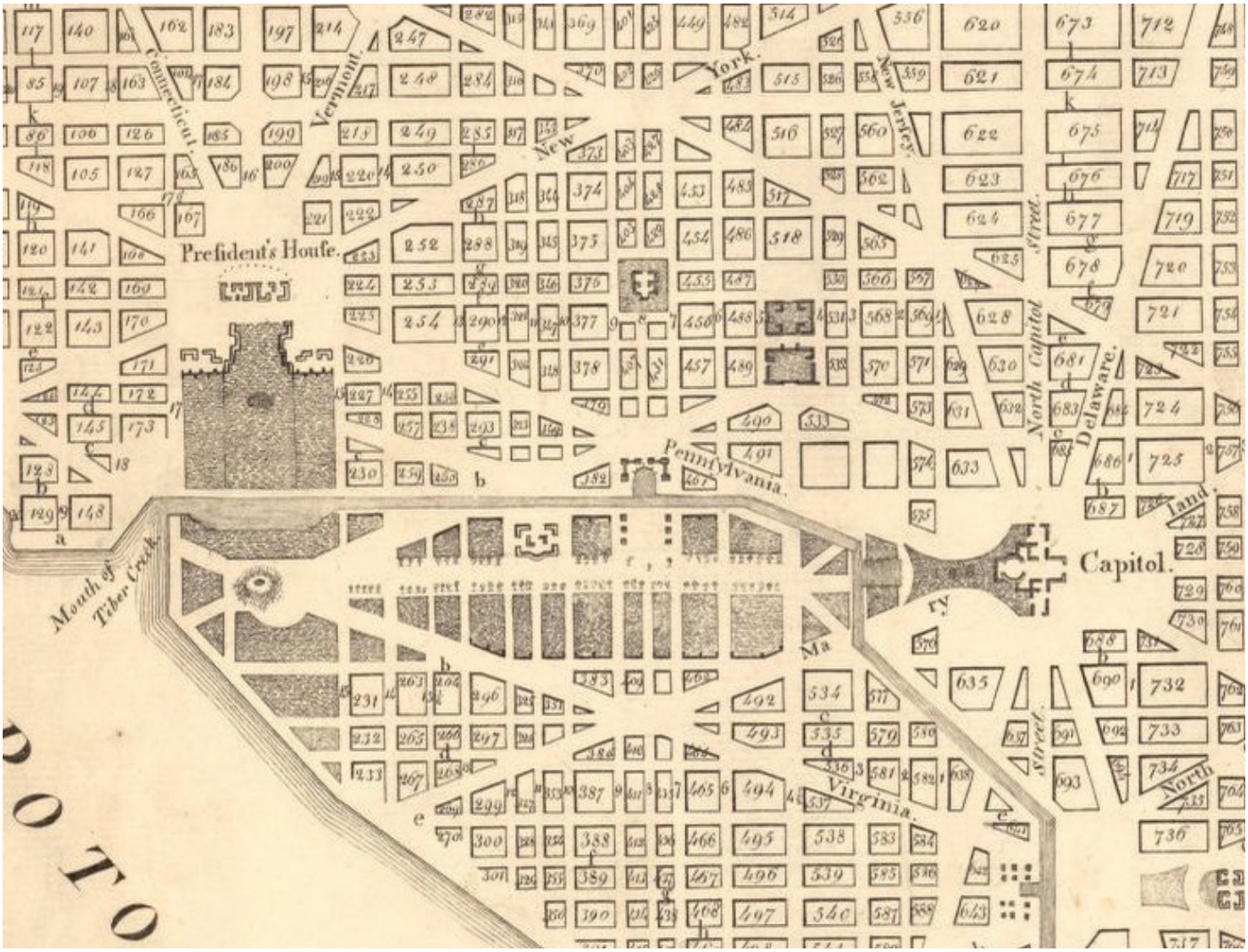

Fig. 4.16

Plan of the city of Washington
DETAIL

Andrew Ellicott, Samuel Hill (engraver)
1792 (facsimile 1888)
U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

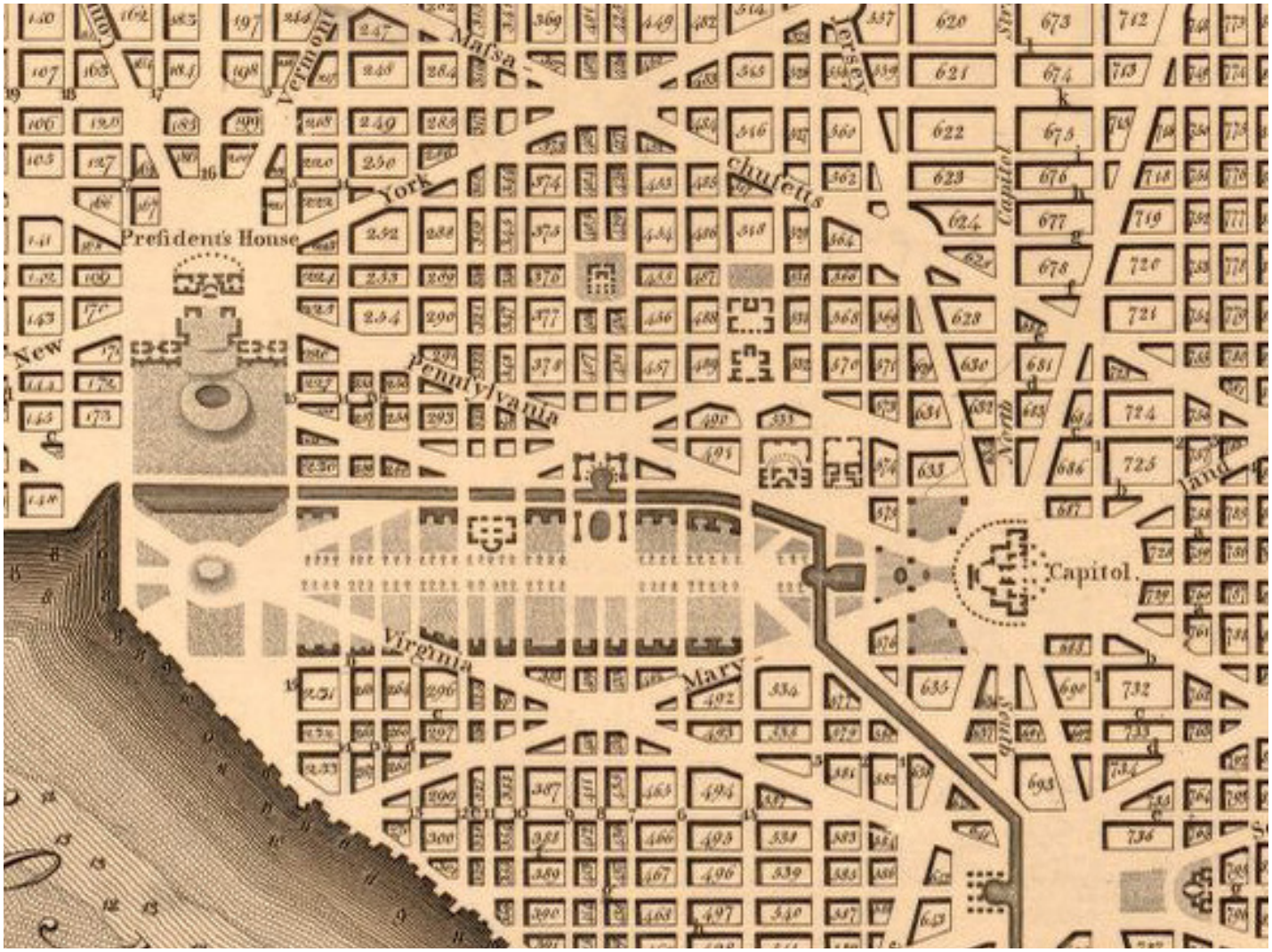

Fig. 4.17

Plan of the city of Washington
DETAIL

Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Thackara & Vallance (engraver)
The Universal Asylum, and Columbian magazine, Philadelphia, Mar. 1792.
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3850.ct004352

L'Enfant's description of this key trajectory may be difficult to interpret precisely, however the designated scale and shape of open spaces flanking and bisecting the grand avenue, the frequency and orientation of paths, streets and avenues, and the parks associated with the Capitol and White House that bracket it, suggest a complex arrangement of part monumental, part commercial life along the monumental spine of the Federal City.

Returning to the Observations contained in the L'Enfant Plan,[28] the first relates the choice of principle sites for the ceremonial life of the city to the existing topography:

> I. *The positions for the different Grand Edifices, and for the several Grand Squares or Areas of different shapes as they are laid down, were first determined on the most advantageous ground, commanding the most extensive prospects and the better susceptible of such improvements as the various intents of the several objects may require.*

An overlay of the primary avenues from the 'Dotted line' and Ellicott plans with the eighteenth-century topography of the region reinforces this logic. The White House and Capitol are indeed positioned at the edge of two ridges forming the bowl of the south-west quadrant of the city. The canal follows the line of Jenkins hill with a relatively even off-set and, to the south bifurcates to run either side of the existing settlement of Carrolsburg (Fig.4.18). The original line of Massachusetts avenue bends around the back of the ridge to find more level ground.[29] The first of the primary topographic logics are retained in the Ellicott revisions and while this later plan reduced the number of smaller public spaces, the most significant spaces are left largely intact apart from a discernible tendency to rationalise eccentric angles and increase the number of regular plots.

Pierre L'Enfant's intentions for the spaces formed between avenues is made clear in Observation III:

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[28] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[29] The original line of Massachusetts avenue conforms to L'Enfant Observation II: Lines or Avenues, of direct communication have been devised, to connect the separate and most distant objects with the principal, and to preserve, through the whole a reciprocity of sight at the same time. Attention has been paid to the passing of those leading avenues over the most favourable ground for prospect and convenience.

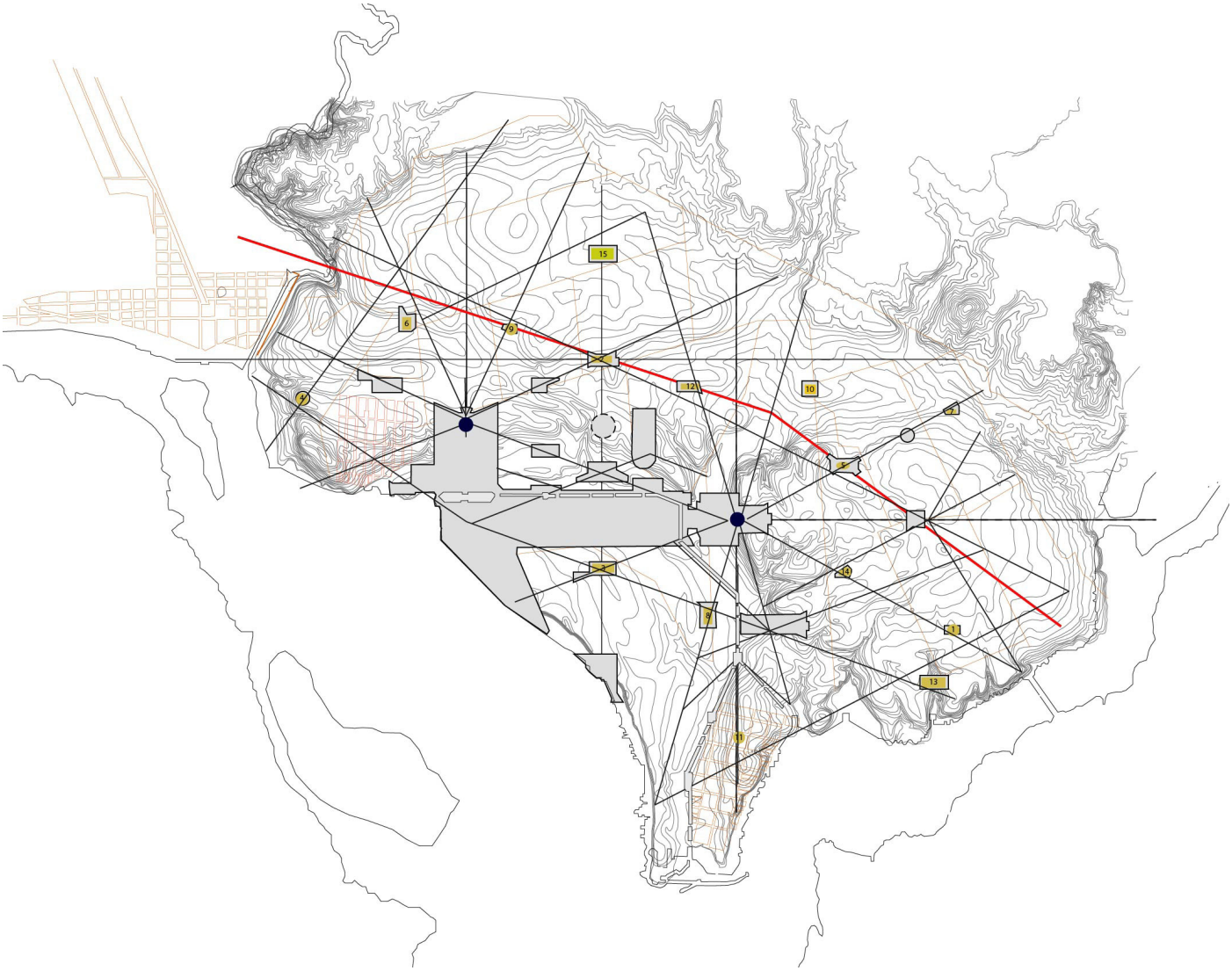

Fig. 4.18

Avenues and key named public spaces in relation to existing topography

The line of Massachusetts Avenue in the Manuscript (L'Enfant) plan appears to follow the highground and avoid depressions in the topography. Equally, the canal skirts the egde of the city's ridge as well as the edge of the Carrollsburg plan.

(Author)

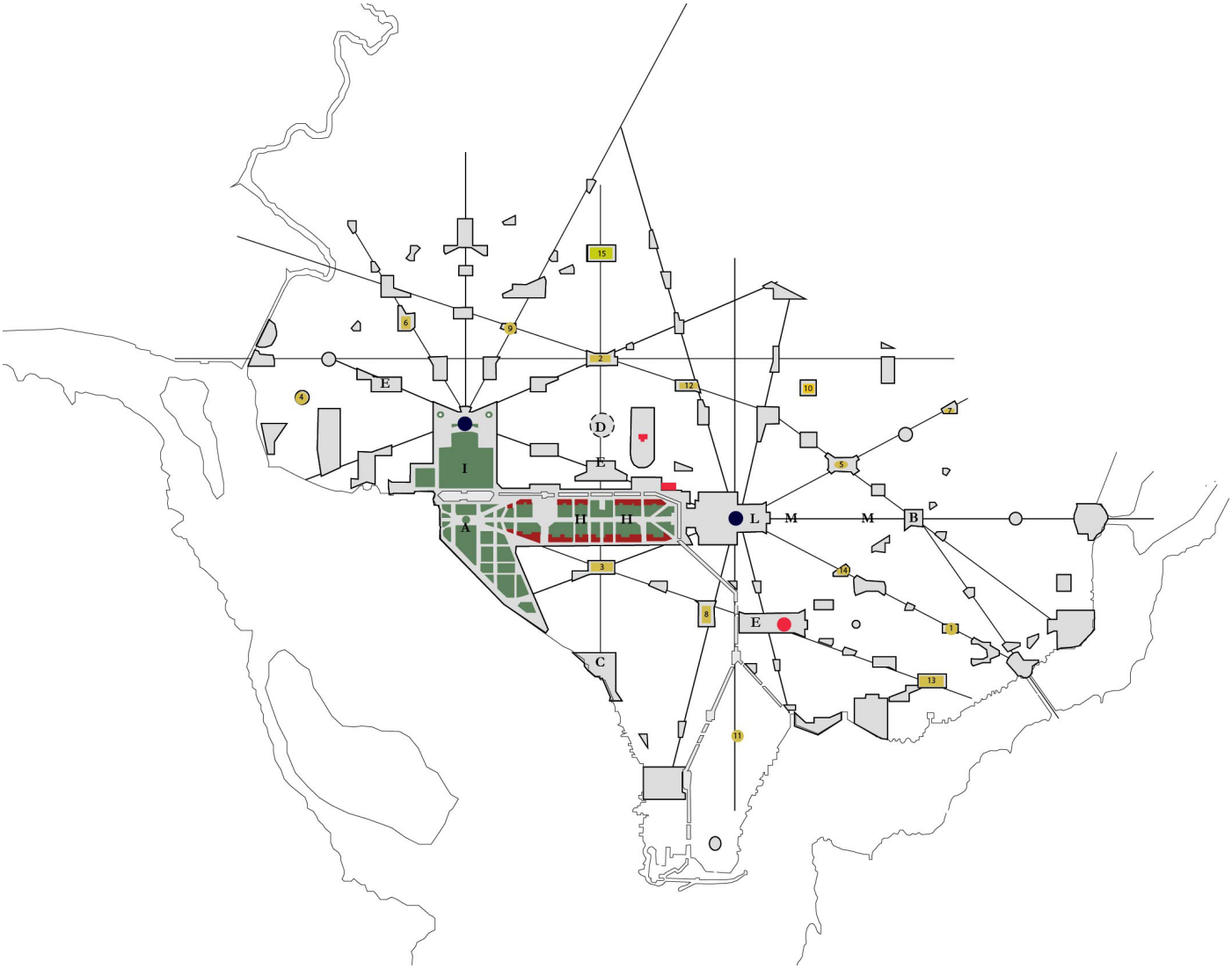

Fig. 4.19

All open spaces in L'Enfant plan

(Author)

> *North and South lines, intersected by others running due East and West, make the distribution of the City into Streets, Squares, &c. and those lines have been so combined, as to meet at certain, given points with those divergent Avenues so as to form on the spaces "first determined," the different Squares or Areas, which are all proportional in magnitude to the number of Avenues leading to them.*

The distribution of these spaces operates at a range of scales, many smaller spaces created by the collision of geometries, while more significant squares are opened by the truncation of streets or the removal of plots. Such openings can be categorised in four parts: the incidental open spaces created by the intersection of avenues and streets, squares and circles that focus neighbourhoods or emphasise critical junctions or viewpoints (see also the state squares), the public spaces that foreground principal public buildings, and the larger, ceremonial spaces housing specific monuments (Fig.4.19).

Ellicott's interpretation of L'Enfant's work retains the majority of the scale and location of principal spaces. The fifteen state squares described in the observations and labelled in the L'Enfant plan are reduced to thirteen, but their locations remain broadly the same (Fig.4.5). Significant shifts relate to the realignment of avenues and the Yglesias and Lewis' recent work on the arrangement of these spaces in the respective plans has demonstrated that whereas L'Enfant placed his public squares to one side of key avenues, Ellicott shifted these to the centre of major junctions.[30] These two authors also argue that such adjustments divorced the spaces from their topographical logics and their relationship to available sources of water. The secondary claim is more difficult to evidence as the notes relating to the squares suggest that 'the center of each Square will admit of Statues, Columus, Obelisks or any other ornaments, such as the different States may choose to erect,'[31] but make no mention of fountains. The presence of water is noted with explicit regard to five major sites, each of which are found in both L'Enfant and Ellicott version of the plans.

The important difference between the two versions of the plan is evident in the overall distribution of open space within the city. Many of the more complex junctions such as

[30] Yglesias, "To Build a Metaphor: L'Enfant's Design for the City of Washington"; Lewis, *Washington: A History of Our National City*.
[31] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."

Fig. 4.20

Dupont circle: L'Enfant Plan, Ellicott Plan and Aerial image

that around what is now Dupont Circle were resolved in the Ellicott version however many unusual slivers of land have remained within the contemporary city, becoming home to odd, multiple traffic islands at larger urban junctions (Fig.4.20). The L'Enfant plan contains far more of these small triangular plots than the Ellicott revision which tended to introduce a regular widening of the avenues to produce multiple, often interconnected open spaces. A comparison of the two versions, isolating the open spaces form the rest of the plan reveals the unexpectedly significant impact of what may well have been seen as a mere tidying up of the June 1791 version. The Ellicott based engravings produce a much more open city than the L'Enfant original (Fig. 4.6, 4.7). Furthermore, the proximity of open spaces to one another has the effect of creating continuous voids in the proposed urban fabric. These voids emphasise and effectively widen the principal avenues and concentrate the public realm along these arteries much more significantly than the earlier version. L'Enfant's plan described a more distributed network of smaller open spaces. Avenues are more constrained and smaller squares punctuate areas of the city that are not otherwise dominated by voids created by the intersection of road geometry.

The larger openings within the city as represented in the two plans reveal similar anomalies, seemingly simple adjustments to the configuration of the setting for public buildings and monuments have a significant impact on their integration within the larger plan for the city. For this reason, the Ellicott plan is a less reliable source for determining L'Enfant's intentions with regard to the nature of this monumental, ceremonial order of the city, while the alignment of avenues in the later plan is likely to reflect the changes made to the structure of the plan between June and August. The L'Enfant's plan and annotation delineate several layers of public space and the placement of monuments. The notes relate to the colour coding of the plan, yellow for the state squares discussed earlier, red for houses of worship, and dark red allocated for 'spacious houses and gardens, such as may accommodate foreign Ministers &c.'[32] The original colouration of the L'Enfant plan has faded completely (Fig.0.2), and the interpretation of these notes relies on the facsimile produced by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey in March of 1887. If the accuracy of the translation can be assumed, it provides essential insight into the civic order of the plan for the city (Fig.4.15).

[32] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.

The first layer of these spaces, the yellow state squares are distributed relatively evenly through the plan (Fig.4.19). All but No.11 has been placed in a planned opening within the urban fabric. Not only are these to house monuments of the States choosing, but they were to serve as a catalyst for the even growth of districts throughout the city. L'Enfant notes that

> 'The situation of these Squares is such, that they are the most advantageously and reciprocally seen from each other, and as equally distributed over the whole City district, and connected by spacious Avenues 'round the grand Federal Improvements, and as contiguous to them, and at the same time as equally distant from each other, as circumstances would admit. The settlements 'round hose[sic] Squares must soon become connected.'[33]

This web of simultaneous development is a critical component of L'Enfant's aspiration for the success of the city. The configuration and character of these spaces is less clear. The squares vary significantly in size and prominence, roughly half being generous in scale and half being almost incidental. We can make informed assumptions as to which square might have been allocated to which space, however there is no solid evidence to support a clear reading.[34] L'Enfant's notes introduce further ambiguity as these spaces are to be given to each state 'for each of them to improve, or to subscribe a sum additional to the value of the land, that purpose, and the improvements round the Squares to be completed in a limited time.'[35] This suggests that, like the allocation of land for public education in the Land Survey system in the Northwest Territory, the distribution of state squares may have been intended as a source of income rather than a spatial constraint.

There is a further network of unallocated larger spaces. A portion of these line the Potomac River and Eastern Branch along their most articulated edges. These, and two further sites adjacent to the proposed canal are assumed to have served river trade and urban commerce respectively (Fig.4.21). Other riverside openings within the fabric complete principal vistas or act as gateways into the city. The remaining spaces are

[33] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.
[34] Yglesias, "To Build a Metaphor: L'Enfant's Design for the City of Washington."
[35] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."

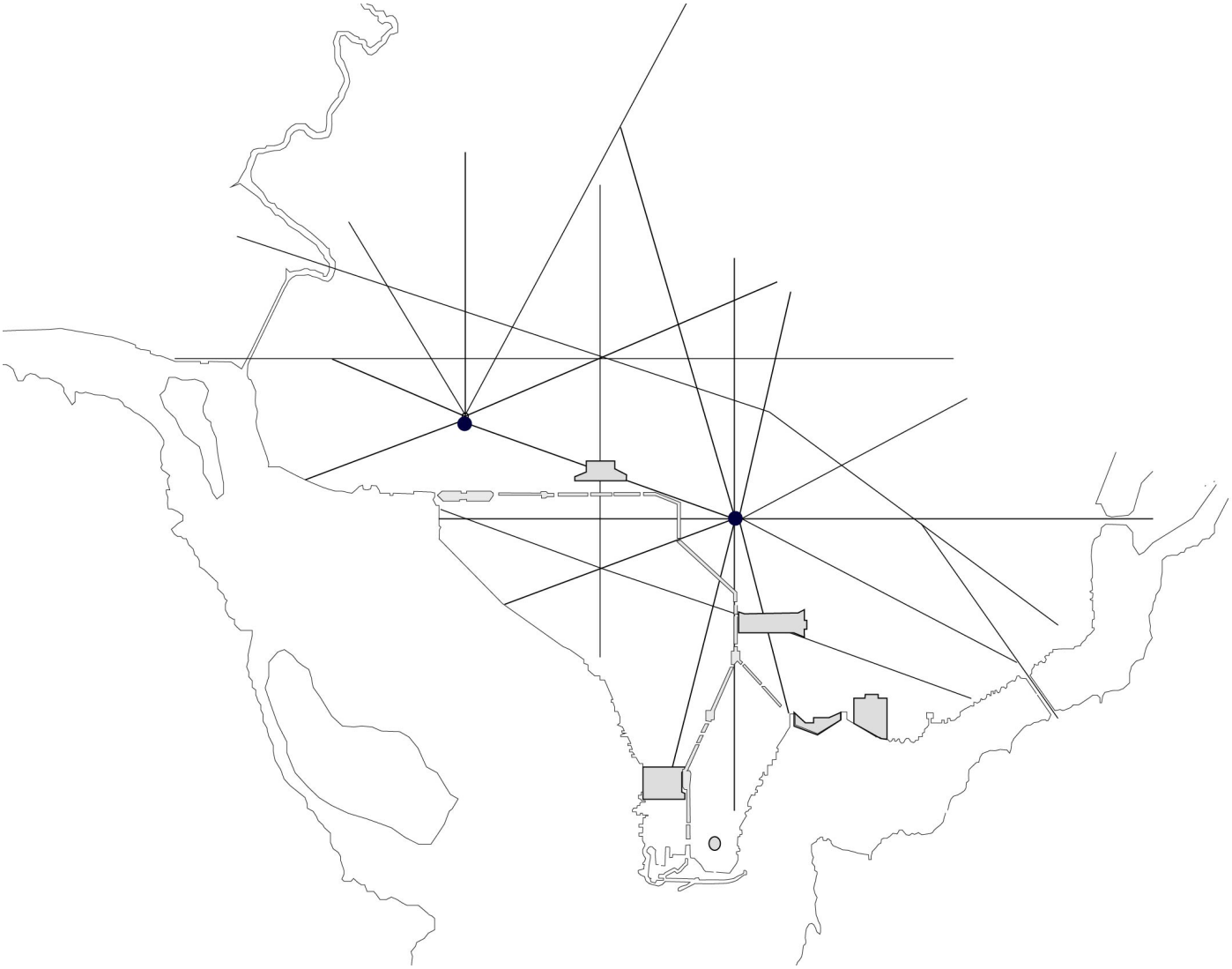

Fig. 4.21

L'Enfant plan - Docks and market spaces

(Author)

described as accommodating 'Colleges and Academies, and of which every Society, whose object is national.'[36] The majority of these appear to cluster north of the White House or occupy openings along the eastern leg of Massachusetts Avenue. Three of these squares include the 'grand fountains, intended with a constant spout of water'[37] that are described in Reference 'E'. The location of these begin to suggest the ceremonial rhythm of the city which is structured most explicitly through the articulation of the characteristics and elements described more fully in L'Enfant's References and their sequence in the plan.

References A-C describe three monuments pinning critical junctions within the plan. The first, point 'A'is 'THE equestrian figure of GEORGE WASHINGTON, a Monument voted in 1783, by the late Continental Congress.'[38] L'Enfant's equestrian statue of Washington is located along the cross hairs of the Capitol and White House axes in an extended park serving as both the culmination of the grand avenue and the slope of the 'Presidents Park' extending south of the White House. References 'B' and 'C' describe two columns, one 'historic' and the other 'to be erected to celebrate the first rise of a Navy.'[39] Both were to serve as 'itinerary' columns or a means of determining distance. In the case of 'B' this was to be treated as a primary national meridian from which 'all distances of places through the Continent, are to be calculated.'[40] Both of these columns mark midpoints within the city, 'B' punctuating the end of 8th St, the vertical axis halfway between the White House and Capitol, and 'C' situated halfway between the Capitol and the eastern edge of the plan. Each of these monuments establish the navigation of the city and initiate several of its critical perspectival trajectories. 'B' and 'C' mark the cross axes that traverse the centre of the plan and 'A' establishes a third orientating node– creating the ceremonial triangle between it, the White house and Capitol buildings (Fig.3.9).

Whereas the two itinerary columns emphasise streets that cut through the monumental core, commercial heart and residential neighbourhoods, the position of the statue of George Washington creates its own focal point from which extend a bifurcating network of avenues, knitting together the primary radii from the White House and Capitol

[36] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.
[37] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.
[38] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.
[39] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.
[40] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.

buildings with the primary cross-axes that bisect them (see Fig.4.14). The north-eastern arm of what would become Louisiana Ave (the now fragmented Indiana Ave) opened into significant squares at its intersection along 12th street where it met the canal, at 8th St. in line with the proposed 'Pantheon', and at 4th/5th St. where it terminated in the square that foregrounds what would become the District's City Hall. To the south, Virginia Ave. transects the extensive opening along the canal at what is now Garfield Park which was likely to have been the commercial centre of the city. It also passed through state squares No. 3 at W 8th St. and No. 9 between W.2nd and W.3rd streets, and No.13 at E.12th St., culminating on the dockside of the Easter Branch. Both these avenues create in L'Enfant's words 'reciprocities of sight'[41] in that they string together the commercial and the symbolic focal points across the city. The western line of these two avenues truncates abruptly at the Potomac River and either by intention or accident, takes in the unsettled landscape towards the Appalachians into the scope of the organisation of the city.

The equestrian statue of the president, and the obelisk that came to stand in its place, serve as a hinge point between the two arms of the open landscape at the heart of the city. L'Enfant's annotations describe these spaces in detail. Reference 'H' describes a 'Grande Avenue, 400 feet in breadth, and about a mile in length, bordered with gardens, ending in a slope from the houses on each side.' This is connected to 'I' the 'Presidents' Park' and 'K.,' a 'Well improved field, being a part of the walk from the President's house, of about 1800 feet in breadth, and ¾ of a mile in length.'[42] The proportions of these spaces have remained largely consistent through the evolution of the plan, but their character has been altered significantly.

L'Enfant's annotation distinguishes between the open field foregrounding what is now the White House and the Avenue or 'grand walk'[43] leading from the Federal House to point 'A' in the plan. The detail presented here and reflected in the drawing suggests that the landscape located south of the White House was intended as an open park. By

[41] See annotation to the L'Enfant plan: L'Enfant and Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States"; see also: L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 33.
[42] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[43] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 39.

contrast, the ‘Grande Avenue’ is depicted as flanked by gardens and houses. These are shown in the plan as enlarged urban blocks rather than a continuous landscape (Fig.4.15). Furthermore, L’Enfant’s description of the lots south of the equestrian monument offers an indication of his intentions. He describes those ‘deep coloured red, with green plots,’ as ‘the best calculated for spacious houses and gardens, such as may accommodate foreign Ministers &c.’ The colouration of the plan, however, provides confusing evidence. The park south of ‘A’ is composed of green lots whose geometry follows that of the surrounding urban fabric. The areas ‘deep coloured red’ are then found flanking the ‘Grande Avenue.’ In his report to Washington of 19 August 1791, L’Enfant describes:

> ‘the streets running west of the upper square of the Federal House … those other streets parallel to that canal, those crossing over it and which are as many avenues to the grand walk from the water cascade under the Federal House to the President park and dependinly extending to the bank of the Potowmack, and also the several squares or area such as are intended for the Judiciary Court - the national bank - the grand church - the play house - market and exchange - all through will offer a variety of situation unparalled in point of beauties - suitable to every purpose and in every point convenient.’[44]

The prose is tangled and the precise meaning opaque, but it is apparent that L’Enfant intended this ceremonial heart of the city to be occupied with diverse programmes and a complex arrangement of spaces and institutions.

The central axis from the White house retains its orientation towards the river with what looks like a tree lined green swathe running through the centre of the blocks reserved for ‘foreign Ministers &c.’ [45] The Grande Avenue extends from the Federal House westwards from an upper square, reached by ‘G’ a ‘Public walk, being a square of 1200 feet through which carriages may ascend to the upper square of the Federal house.’ From the base of the ‘Congress building’ was to flow ‘F’ ‘a cascade of forty feet high.’[46]

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[44] L’Enfant, 39.
[45] It is impossible to determine the orientation of the equestrian monument. One would assume it was to look west and outward up the Potomac River but it is equally possible that it would have been oriented towards the south and the twelve mile stretch of the river towards Mount Vernon.
[46] L’Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, “Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States.”

The Urban Block

The institutional order of the city is organised around this central triangle formed between what is now the White House, Capitol and Washington monument. The Pantheon, market and city hall, as described by L'Enfant or evidenced through consistent early use, inhabited the north flank of the Grande Avenue (Fig.4.19). These spaces mark a transition between the monumental nodes of the plan, the matrix of avenues and the order of the lived city. The larger squares and open spaces associated with these focal points establish their own order.

To the north of what is now the Mall a lozenge of space with numerous small squares and a complex range of block sizes. This neighbourhood can be read as an annex to the political heart of the city. With market, national church (pantheon) and local government site, the area could have been animated by civic ritual, mediating between the symbolic resonance of national politics and the everyday rhythm of the residential neighbourhoods beyond. To the south, more diverse spaces are focused on the extensive square at what is now Garfield Park. This space is contained between the trade thoroughfare of Massachusetts Avenue and the canal and may well have served as the commercial heart of the city.

Each of these spaces and the neighbourhoods that surround them are defined by an unusually irregular urban grid. Block sizes undulate across the plan and the logic of a more regular interval is difficult to identify. Fig.4.22 maps the most consistent block interval in the L'Enfant plan (roughly 100 x 100m).[47] This shows how more regular neighbourhood clusters populate the site. The blocks between these clusters are expanded and correlate to larger more public programmes, areas that align with primary institutions, or spaces near to the intended crossing of the Eastern branch. The irregularity of the block reveals the complexity of the plan and provides some insight into how L'Enfant envisaged the immediate simultaneous settlement of such a district of such an unprecedented scale to be manifest. The block structure may also be read as a response to the existing topography, smaller, presumably residential, plots in the

[47] By comparison the Philadelphia block was approximately 120 x 120 meters.

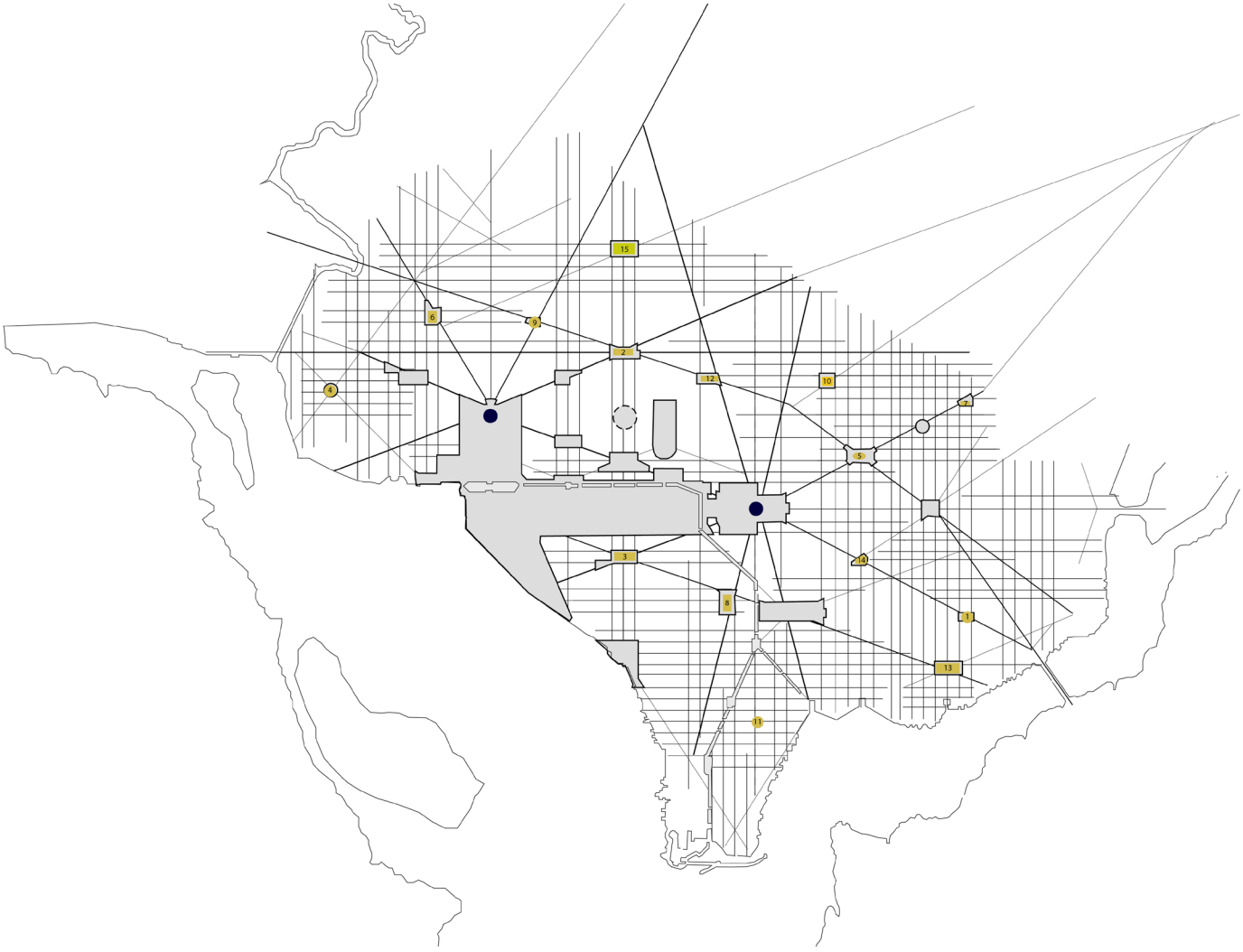

Fig. 4.22

Grid interval in relation to planned open space

The smaller grid interval is the most consistent in the Manuscript plan. This corresponds to the residential neighbourhoods that frame the more formal spaces of the public realm and are clustered around the proposed state squares.

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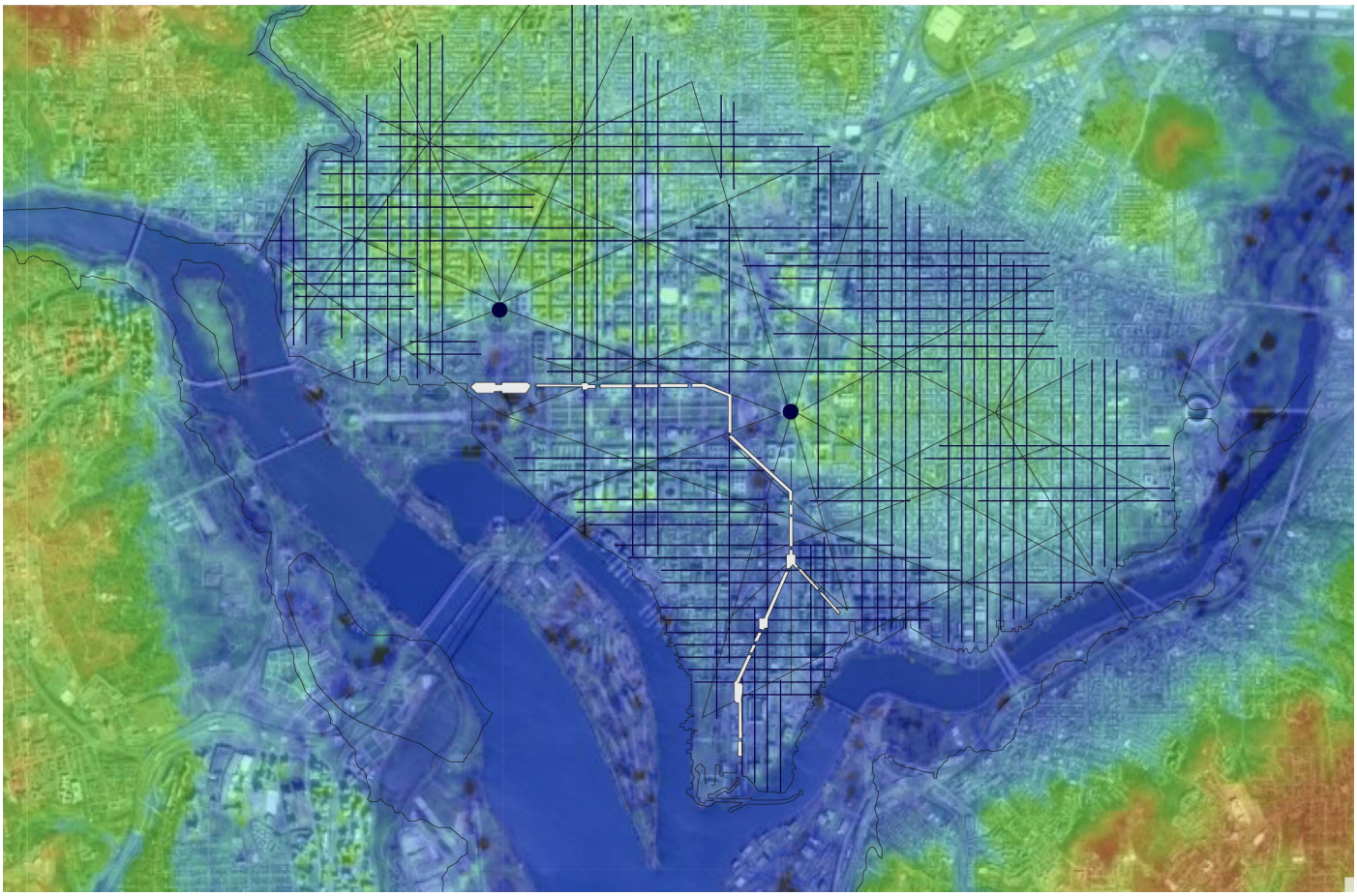


Fig. 4.23

Grid interval in relation to current topography

The grid relates to the lower areas of the topography, leaving the larger open spaces to the highpoint of the territory.

northeast laid out over lower, more even, terrain. This is particularly visible if the 1791 grid is laid over the current topography (Fig.4.23).

The character of these blocks and the nature of the street are described in two annotations to the plan. L'Enfant notes that the spaces around the Presidents park 'L' and along the horizontal axis of the Capitol to the east, East Capitol Street NE, would be flanked by pavements 'will pass under an arched way, under whose cover, Shops will be most conveniently and agreeably situated.'[48] These arcaded streets suggest an ambition for a dense and populated city with structures built to 'stand on the Streets, and every lot, even those on the divergent Avenues, [to] run square with their fronts.'

***

L'Enfant set out to create a city 'on a dimention proportioned to the greatness which a city the Capitale of a powerfull Empire ought to manifest,'[49] and there was little direct precedent for such an endeavour. As early as September of 1789 L'Enfant had noted that 'no nation had ever before the opportunity offered them of deliberately deciding on the spot where their Capital city should be fixed, or of combining every necessary consideration in the choice of situation.'[50] In the same letter to George Washington, L'Enfant speaks of this being 'an occasion for acquiring a reputation,'[51] this reputation presumably resting not only on the size of the commission but on L'Enfant's capacity to create a nation's capital worthy of the paradigmatic status that new republic had attained.

We know from his correspondence with Thomas Jefferson that he sought various maps of cities, but he was also eager to assure Jefferson that he was pursuing a 'new and original' plan.[52] In many respects the Potomac Valley provided the unique context in which any city of such a scale would inevitably be a radical departure. Having traced the primary archival material, it has been possible to understand the plan for the Federal

[48] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[49] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 7.
[50] L'Enfant, "To George Washington from Pierre L'Enfant, 11 September 1789."
[51] L'Enfant.
[52] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 24.

City within this wider topographic context and draw new conclusions. Establishing the varying rhythms of the plan has also provided the basis for a more valuable comparison with other eighteenth century cities and the many potential influences on L'Enfant's work. It is apparent that he intended a far more nuanced and spatially layered urban environment than what emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And while this may have evoked the character of a European precedent that post-Revolutionary America had rejected, it brought it together with an unstructured natural expanse in a completely unprecedented manner. The following chapter explores this unique context and the modulation of landscape, ceremony and the everyday within the structure of the plan.

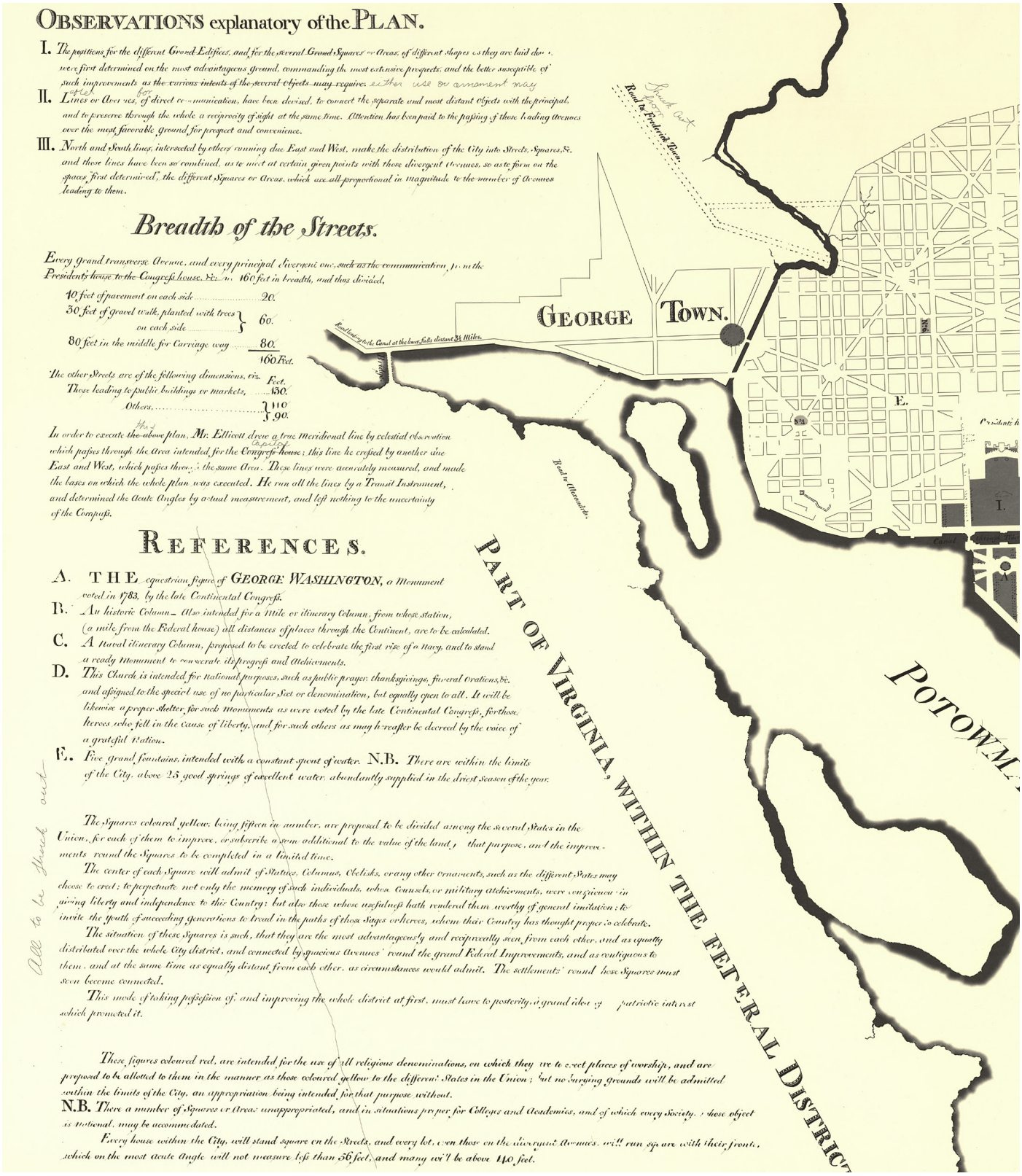


Fig. 4.24

L'Enfant Plan Annotation detail

Fig. 4.25

L'Enfant Plan Annotation detail

Chapter 5: Ceremonial Order and the Everyday City

Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington represents the first spatial manifestation of the post-Revolutionary Union. From the cascade at the base of the 'Congress building' was to flow along the canal and into the Potomac, thereby fashioning the seat of government as a well spring of the growing nation.[1] Thus, according to L'Enfant, 'in every respect advantageously situated the Federal City would soon grow of itself and spread as the branches of a tree does toward were they meet with most nourishment.'[2]

This metaphor of growth is prevalent in L'Enfant's description of his intentions and he appears to have been eager to implement a plan that would stimulate an unprecedented but seemingly essential form of instantaneous settlement. In June of 1791 he writes of establishing:

> 'a reisprocity of sight and making them thus seemingly connected promot a rapide stellement over the whole so that the most remot may become an adition to the principal while without the help of these divurgents communications such setlements if at all attempted would be languid, and lost in the Extant would become detremental to the main establishment.'[3]

Such practical considerations and their influence over the detail of the plan would prove essential, as their delayed implementation did indeed see the city languish for close to a century after its founding. However, given L'Enfant's educational background, the

[1] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 37.
[2] L'Enfant, 30.
[3] L'Enfant, 33.

intellectual climate into which the plan emerged, and its correspondingly broad ambitions, it is important to consider the iconographic power legible in its organization alongside the pragmatic origins of its instigation.

This chapter explores how this order was made legible as part of the larger structure of late Enlightenment thought and the mechanisms of governance that it implied. Such structures, both physical and conceptual, brought together the rationalisation of nature through agriculture, land speculation and taxation with their political implications.[4] L'Enfant's experience of implementing this tradition architecturally may have been limited, however there is some evidence of it in his previous work, from the topographical analysis of the battlefield that would have informed his fort construction, through to his designs for a parades, festivals and banquets that had dominated his career prior to his Federal City commission.[5] The review of the structure of the plan, outlined in this chapter, demonstrates how L'Enfant's experience enabled him to use the natural context to form a structured background to the political life of the city.

Such a structured manipulation of the natural landscape to derive the plan of a town was a strategy that had developed in Europe over the preceding century.[6] By virtue of timing, the 1791 plan represents an important reflection of the debate over the design of both towns and gardens in the late eighteenth-century.[7] Little focused consideration has been given to this critical aspect of L'Enfant's work before, evidence of his influences being deemed tenuous or 'mostly circumstantial'[8] while detailed accounts of the history of the plan have tended to emphasise the plan's originality.[9] Such a view of the city is not misplaced as the plan is indeed highly unusual. However, it has not been adequately considered within the context of eighteenth-century garden design and its influence on

[4] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.
[5] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[6] Laugier and Wale, *An Essay on Architecture; in Which Its True Principles Are Explained ... Adorned with a Frontispiece, Designed by Mr. Wale, Etc.*
[7] Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century*; Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment*.
[8] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 19.
[9] Bowling, *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever*; Bowling, *The Creation of Washington, D. C.: The Idea and Location of the American Capital.*; Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*; Gutheim and Lee, "Worthy of the Nation: Washington, DC, from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission"; Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."

urban planning.[10] Given the metaphorical role of 'the natural' in concurrent political discourse, such an understanding is also essential to determining the extent to which L'Enfant city plan can be read as a monument to the idea of America, at a time when this, and the institutional structure that supported it, was being defined.

This final chapter outlines the plausible influences on the plan and the significance of its configuration. It is structured according to a descending series of scales and examines first the relationship with the wider landscape, second, the distribution of institutional structures and the ceremonial order of the city and finally, the projected rhythms of the everyday as they are revealed in the allocation of commercial and residential neighborhoods. This relates the structure of L'Enfant's plan to prevailing ideas regarding the significance of cultivated, designed, and 'wild' nature; to the settings of eighteenth-century political theatre and festive culture, and to examples of thriving port cities that would have been familiar to L'Enfant at the time.

Previous Interpretations of the Plan

The vagaries of L'Enfant's prose and the limitations of the faded plan have prompted contradictory interpretations. The most extensive attempts to dissect the archived drawings coincided with the development of the McMillan commission's designs for the monumental core of the district, which formed part of a wider Senate Park Commission plan of 1901. As chief draftsman on the project, William T Partridge was one of the first to produce a comprehensive analysis of the principles established in the 1791 L'Enfant drawing.[11] Partridge dwells only briefly on the supposed detail of the public spaces, focusing instead on the primacy of the natural topography and projected regular sequence of a 'plaid of streets.'[12] For Partridge the grid, however erratic, was informed by a regular interval that coincided with significant sites within the plan. Partridge then argues that these points along the grid were united by the radial avenues to shorten perceived distances across the territory and to achieve the 'reciprocity of sight' to which

[10] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*; Konvitz, "Grandeur in French City Planning under Louis XIV Rochefort and Marseille"; Neuman, "French Domestic Architecture in the Early 18th Century: The Town Houses of Robert de Cotte."
[11] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."
[12] Helfrich, "'Beloved Ancien': William T. Partridge's Recollections of the Senate Park Commission and the Subsequent Mall Development," 287.

L'Enfant refers in his explanatory note.[13] Partridge defends his position with care and with reference to L'Enfant's letter to George Washington of 22 June 1791.[14] Such a defence is well placed but undermined by further analysis. As we have seen, it is apparent in the analytical work conducted in the preceding chapter, that the trajectory of avenues and their coincidence with specific 'Grand Edifices' are anchored by points within the extended landscape and so produce a broader symbolic order.

Concurrent to Partridge's work, Elbert Peets began a long series of studies of the L'Enfant plan in 1916 that have been instrumental in understanding the architect's intentions.[15] Peets' work is unique in providing speculative plans, perspectives and sketch views that envisage the likely configuration of the significant convergences of public space (Fig.5.1). These rely heavily on French precedent and although Peets refers more often to Versailles than to Paris, his concluding remarks in his 1933 article on 'L'Enfant's Washington' suggest a decidedly urban sensibility. He notes that 'L'Enfant's genius for amalgamating what might be called the sacred and the profane structures…has the happiest effect on the feeling of the town.'[16] He goes on to suggest that this is the 'delightful democracy, the easy civic manners of the French, accustomed for centuries to pursue their affairs, though it be no more than the buying of two eggs in the shadow of a cathedral' in contrast to an (English) planning process 'too convinced that the parlour part of our towns must be meticulously separated from the kitchen and dining room parts.'[17]

While whimsical in part, Peets' studies are singular in their visual specificity. His sketches do not always cite specific sources, but they represent a wholly new attempt to treat L'Enfant's vision as urban within the 18th century tradition. This chapter uses this work as a starting point to relate the spaces identified by Peets and subsequently reassessed by Donald Jackson[18] to specific contemporary examples built or only planned by 1790. These correspond first to the configuration of public squares, and then to the inhabitation of what is now the Mall, too easily interpreted as a green sward since

[13]L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[14] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning," 30.
[15] Peets, "L'Enfant's Washington"; Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[16] Peets, "L'Enfant's Washington," 164.
[17] Peets, 164.
[18] Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View."

formed by cutting in the corners of the axial street. All this, plainly, would have changed our conception of L'Enfant if it had been worthily realised. But business centred elsewhere and no civic plaza ever developed, to the serious loss, I am sure, of the corporate personality of the city, which has been completely submerged by the architecturally-embodied dominance of the national government. Just now plans are being developed for a civic centre (see TOWN PLANNING REVIEW, December, 1931, Plate 48), but it is placed, I fear, too much in the shadow of the Federal groups.

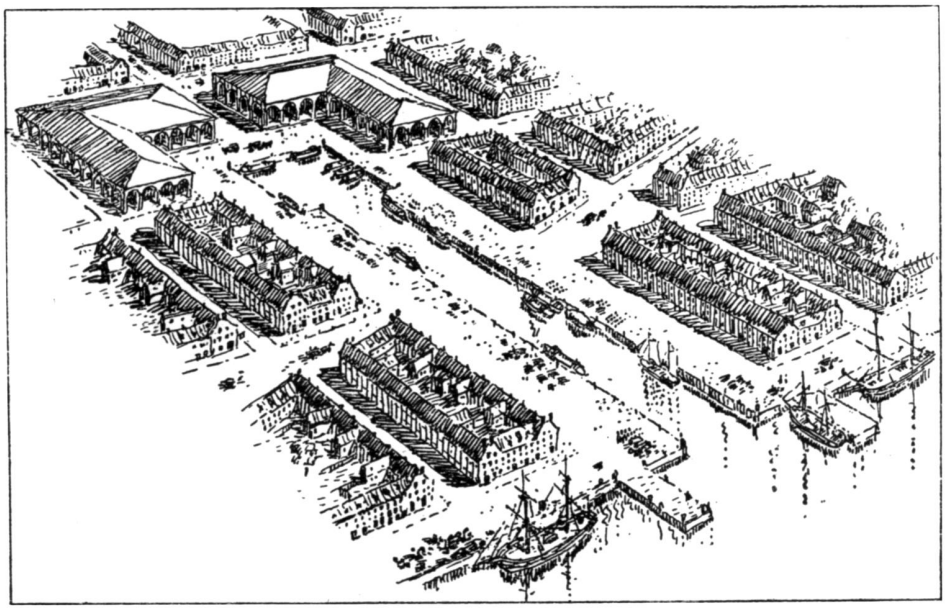


Fig. 3. Washington. The Basin and Market on the East Branch of the Potomac.

In ascribing the loss of this and the other plazas to ill-fortune I must not intimate that if good luck had favoured his designs L'Enfant could have been listed as a full confrere of the eighteenth century masters of the plaza genre. His work, if it does not reveal ignorance of the plaza art of the period in which he was born, is, let us say, sharply divergent from that style. L'Enfant hitched his wagon to the star of wide avenues, and it is precisely the wide avenue that is the great enemy of the plaza, whose precious sense of enclosure, and the contrast-value of its flood of light, the broad street destroys. L'Enfant, I fancy, worked

Fig. 5.1

The Basin and Market on the East Branch of the Potomac

Elbert Peets 1933
L'Enfant's Washington The Town Planning Review Vol. 15, No. 3 (May, 1933), pp. 155-164 (11 pages)

its twentieth-century, post-McMillan Commission re-planning. Finally, it is possible to compare the distribution of urban programme in the Federal City to the growth of new national capitals and ports towns and more speculative visions emerging from the *Ècole des Beaux- Arts* at the time. These comparisons provide a strong body of evidence for the character of place inferred in plan of 1791.

The Long View and the Wider Topography

What is hitherto absent from the literature is a studied attempt to understand the 1791 plan within the context of eighteenth-century theories of landscape. Whether fully intentional or not, L'Enfant's plan is positioned at a point when ideas as to the influence of the control over nature on the design of cities was evolving parallel to a transition between principles of the formal and the picturesque garden. L'Enfant conflated the two traditions in the superimposition of a Baroque plan, in the long tradition of geometricized plans in honour a prevailing figurehead, on what Dougherty terms a 'slovenly wilderness.'[19] However, his strategies may have been more knowing and his influences more varied than the literature suggests.[20] The majority of the historical reviews of the origin of the plan have focused on the influence of Versailles[21] and while the radiating avenues and the emphasis on the palace of the king are recognisable motifs in L'Enfant's work, examples of such organisational devices, often married to a wilder landscape in response to the growing influence of the picturesque, could be found elsewhere in France in places such as Marly-le-Roi and the Château de Chanteloup,[22] as well as in the structure of the expansion of the Paris suburbs.

Such examples provide a more suitable precedent for the thematic intersection of a highly orchestrated system of avenues, a modulated grid and the underlying topography. It is unnecessary to regard the 1791 plan as belonging to a singular tradition or a mere stitching together of two, given the complexity of the evolution in garden theory during this period.[23] Furthermore, the examples that L'Enfant sought from Thomas Jefferson,

[19] Dougherty, "Baroque and Picturesque Motifs in L'Enfant's Design for the Federal Capital." p.36
[20] Stephenson, *A Plan Whol[l]y New: Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington*; Jennings, "Artistry as Design L'Enfant's Extraordinary City"; Gutheim and Lee, "Worthy of the Nation: Washington, DC, from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission."
[21] Mumford and Downey, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*; Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[22] Miller, *Washington in Maps*.
[23] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*; Townsend, "The Picturesque"; Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*.

indicate that while he may have been influenced by examples of a structured landscape, he was also intent on developing a plan for a viable urban settlement with a strong commercial centre based on river trade. The material that Jefferson was able to provide, despite being 'whatever…may fall within [his] reach'[24] may well have given L'Enfant a suitable basis for the distribution of public space, connection between existing settlements, and the structure of the city's port. The influence of such precedent is discernible at this more general level but apart from the strong radial plan of Karlsruhe, their detail is not reflected in the L'Enfant's eventual design. Elbert Peets makes a strong argument for the influence of John Evelyn's plan for the rebuilding of London on the layout of the Federal City but there is no evidence that L'Enfant had seen the project or had access to it during his planning of the city.[25]

For all these possibilities, the truth was that Pierre L'Enfant had limited experience of the European cites to which he referred, and it is likely that he would have relied on his upbringing in Paris. His interest in creating a 'grand city' makes Paris, its surroundings, and the interface of public and private gardens with the city, a more likely precedent. The importance of Paris to the L'Enfant plan connects his work to concurrent ideas related to the adaption of garden design to urban planning by Abbé Laugier[26] and the experiments in the control of landscape being exercised with great variety by figures such as Stanislaus Leszczynski at Lunéville (1737-1753)[27] and Watelet at the Moulin Joli (1754-1772).[28] This thematic context, its influence on the development of Paris in the mid-eighteenth century, and a close reading of the plans of such precedents provide insights into L'Enfant's intentions for the form of settlement and articulation of public space in the new city.

In the first instance, these spaces are contained within a broader framework. The primary structures of L'Enfant's plan are established through the long views extending to the visible horizon. This has been cited as evidence of L'Enfant's tendency to think *en grande* however, it is probable that he conceived of the structure of

[24] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 42.
[25] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[26] Laugier and Wale, *An Essay on Architecture; in Which Its True Principles Are Explained ... Adorned with a Frontispiece, Designed by Mr. Wale, Etc.*
[27] Tyszczuk, *The Story of an Architect King: Stanislas Leszczynski in Lorraine 1737-1766*.
[28] Taylor-Leduc, "Luxury in the Garden: La Nouvelle Héloïse Reconsidered."

the city and the visual control of its distant landscape as a continuum.[29] Such depictions of landscape were evident in the paintings of the early half of the century, and it is likely that, reputedly studying under his father at the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*, L'Enfant would have been taught these particular perspectival techniques. The battle scenes painted by L'Enfant's father, describe a broad and complex topography, receding towards a watery horizon in which the sun, establishes the vanishing point, is reflected (Fig. 5.2). Here the view is extended to the absolute boundary of vision, culminating in either water or mountains. The structuring of the core components of the plan for Washington, D.C. around such extended viewpoints, one along the natural reflecting pool of the Potomac River in his positioning of the White House, and the other set by its relationship to the foundation stone of the district through the avenues radiating from the Capitol (Fig.4.11), suggest this approach. Furthermore, the mastery of this structured view would have given L'Enfant the means of envisaging the city, the geometry of the avenues being a function of the optical mechanics for such a complex projection.

Scenic and landscape painting techniques had evolved throughout the eighteenth century alongside the shifting conventions of the landscape garden - from the formal to the picturesque.[30] L'Enfant's modulation of the plan, from block - to boulevard - to wilderness, alludes to many of the conventions associated with the formal organisation suggested by the bird-eye perspective, but it also suggest a familiarity with the new naturalism emerging in garden design. Given L'Enfant's education and his knowledge of both Paris and possibly Versailles, he would have understood the significance of such an expansive layout as residing within two distinct traditions and contemporary modes of thought: the first, an on-going debate regarding the formal versus picturesque garden plan which was being exercised through the rapid development of the *Hôtels* of western Paris;[31] and second, the broader construct that elevated nature to the domain of virtue and made the return to a natural state the precondition of a moral order.[32] The

[29] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[30] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*.
[31] Wiebenson.
[32] Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*.

Fig. 5.2

Battle of Fontenoy

Pierre L'Enfant - father (1704 - 1787),
1745
Château de Versailles

revolutionary politics and conquest of the continental interior made of late eighteenth-century America a central exemplar of this latter concept.[33]

The physical implications of the primacy of nature, prior to American independence were typically expressed in the evolution of the European picturesque garden,[34] but the structured landscapes of Le Nôtre, and of the L'Enfant plan represent a transitional period in which the universal language of geometry was employed to represent an ordering of nature at a range of registers. The long vistas that typified both established a structured ground within which the garden pavilions in the case of Versailles, and the institutions of government in the case of the Federal City, could be situated. For L'Enfant the most significant, foundational vistas were orientated towards lines of sight well beyond a direct range of vision and point to an attempt to create a framework that extended beyond the literal arrangement of the city, towards a more symbolic relationship to the wider territory and, within this early American context, the promise of the expanding frontier. Writing to Washington in June 1791, he commented: 'I believe the question [of unifying the city] may be easily solved, not viewing in part but embracing in one view the whole extent from the Eastern branch to Georgetown, and from the banks of the Potomac to the mountains.'[35]

Seen within this context, the representational capacity of L'Enfant's primary converging avenues belongs as much to Karlsruhe or Versailles as to the categorised landscape of the maps of the *Chasses du Roi* which conflated garden, rural landscape and urban topography into a vast geometrised view of nature typified by the King's radiating hunting avenues (Fig.5.3).[36] The relationship between the plan and its landscape is important as it accentuates L'Enfant's ambition for the city to embody the relationship between government, the figure of the President, nature and geometry, rather than referring to the built precedent of an inhabited settlement exclusively. This is not to suggest that L'Enfant conceived of Washington as a pure abstraction or that he neglected civic and commercial infrastructure, both of which were interwoven into the

[33] Gould, "Virtue, Ideology, and the American Revolution: The Legacy of the Republican Synthesis"; Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*; Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*.
[34] Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*.
[35] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 34.
[36] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*.


S. GERMAIN
VERSAILLES
PLAINE DE GARENNE
PLAINE DE VILLEPREUX
PLAINE DE TROU MOREAU
PLAINE DE GATINE

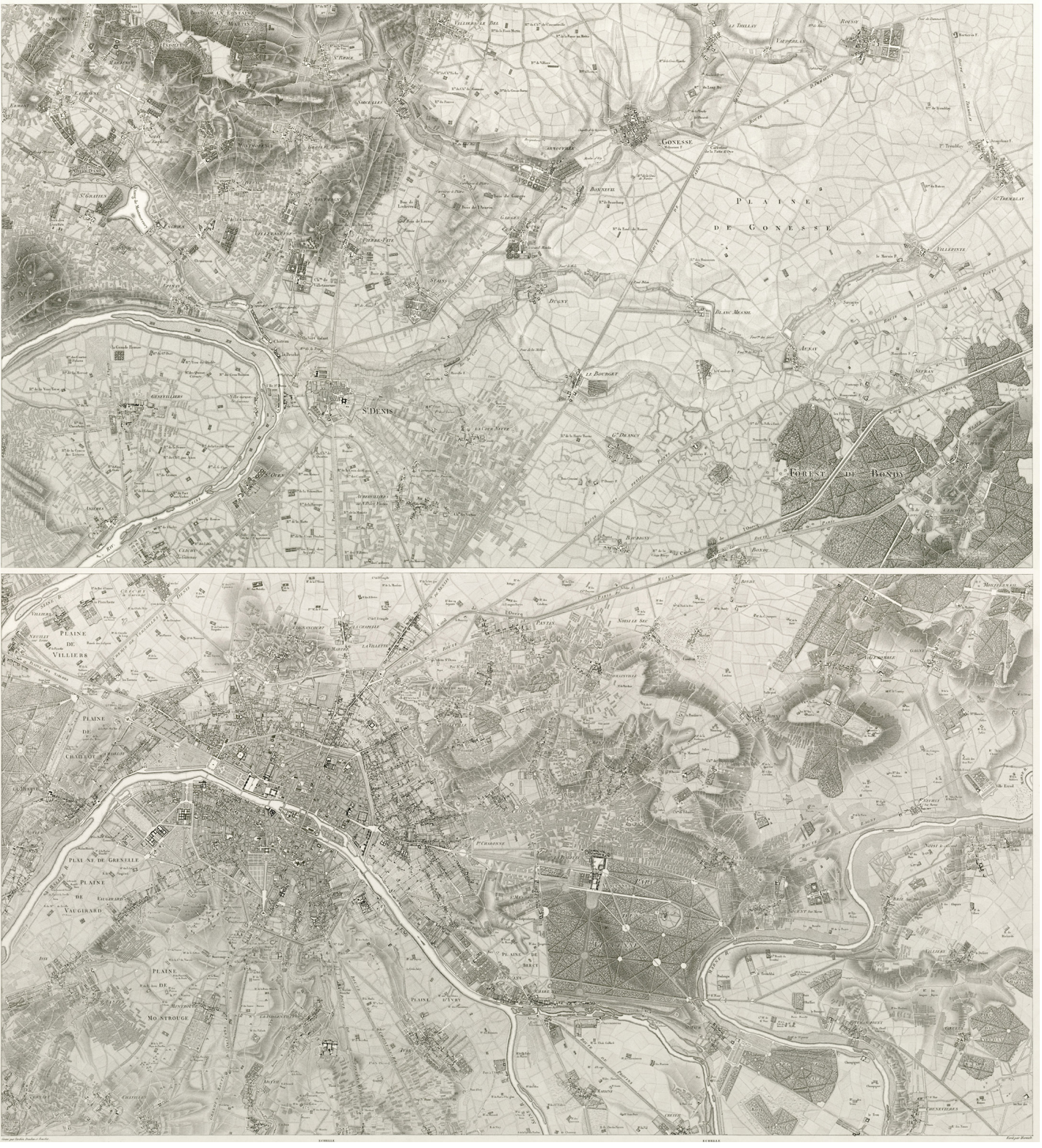


Fig. 5.3

Carte des Chasses du Roy en 4 Feuilles

1773
Cartothèque numérique de la Société d'Histoire de Nanterre

formal device of the plan, but that these too were understood as part of a representational order.

The growth of the Paris suburbs and the eighteenth-century development of the *place royale* typology are the most obvious precedents for this approach. Dora Wiebenson's work on the history of the picturesque garden elucidates the principles established in France at a time when L'Enfant would have been resident in Paris and enrolled at the *Académie*.[37] She has charted the development of a hybrid form in which the new diagonal *allées* of the *Regénce* garden formal French garden became opened to the picturesque countryside and extended country estates as early as 1709.[38] Such an opening up of a geometric arrangement to a wider, wilder hinterland pointed to an orientation to landscape and an attendant theorisation of agrarian virtue and moral retreat,[39] ideas that came to dominate political discourse in the American Revolutionary period, as established in previous chapters. Such ideas were then assimilated into eighteenth-century writing, the development of garden design, and its urban context. Laugier writing in 1755 claimed 'Il faut regarder une ville comme une forêt'[40] this pointing to a desire for the city of Paris to be conceived as a whole by being articulated as a garden to achieve the monumentality and grandeur suitable to its status.

The incorporation of nature into the fabric of the city as well as the formal arrangement of private gardens resonated with contemporary representational frameworks. But most importantly, the elevation of the 'natural' to an ideal physical and moral state reflects late enlightenment political thought from Rousseau to Locke and is prevalent in the foundation structures of the American union. L'Enfant may have had a limited understanding of such arguments and the relative distribution of authority that they propounded, but his plan reveals an implied grasp of three manifestations of these ideas: first, the unifying power of the figure of the president that was derived from an iconography of kingship; second, the interrelationship between garden and city planning as supported by the writings of Abbé Laugier and reflected in the growth of the Paris

[37] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[38] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*, 7.
[39] Olwig and Tuan, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*; Ning, "Freedom in Middle French Enlightenment : Interpreted through a Picturesque Garden."; Neumeyer, "The Landscape Garden as a Symbol in Rousseau, Goethe and Flaubert."
[40] Laugier and Wale, *An Essay on Architecture; in Which Its True Principles Are Explained ... Adorned with a Frontispiece, Designed by Mr. Wale, Etc.*, 263.

suburbs; and third, patterns of urban ritual life that been practiced for centuries in Europe and informed by L'Enfant's own festival and parade organisation in New York.

The first of these assumptions is apparent in the primary organisation of the plan around the natural modulation of the topography, the path of the Potomac River and the positioning of the President's House to take full advantage of both (Fig 5.4). This, the original housing of the executive office in the centre of the Capitol building, and the proposed equestrian monument at the intersection of the cardinal axes of both primary structures framed the centre of the new city as a vast *place royal*.[41] Such overt celebration of the singular figure of the President stood in this case, as a representation of national union, centred on the paradigmatic value of heroic virtue of George Washington.[42] The triangular arrangement that this established then determined a secondary commercial order for the urban centre. Each strategy is made visible through the close reading of the plan detailed in the previous chapter and made relevant through a development of the context in which this plan was drawn and annotated, namely L'Enfant's training as a landscape painter at the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* and strong influence of parallel development in Paris and the discourse that informed it.[43]

A reorganisation of Paris at this scale suggested by Laugier was never fully realised, but the designs emerging from the 1748 competition for the Place de la Concorde,[44] Pierre Patte's amalgamation of the winning entries in 1765,[45] and the eventual development of the site to the west of the *Tuilleries*, established a new typology of public squares, a network of interconnection between them and a level of integration with public parks and private gardens that are strongly reflected in the 1791 plan and L'Enfant's designation of the spaces within it. The primary spaces of L'Enfant's 1791 plan can then be reimagined with reference to the 1739 Turgot and 1775 Jaillot plans of Paris (Figs.0.7, 0.8, 5.6, 5.7), Pierre Patte's publication of the Places Royales competition

[41] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Regime*.
[42] Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*; Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*.
[43] Laugier and Wale, *An Essay on Architecture; in Which Its True Principles Are Explained ... Adorned with a Frontispiece, Designed by Mr. Wale, Etc.*; Middleton, *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*; Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*.
[44] McClellan, "The Life and Death of a Royal Monument."
[45] Patte, *Monumens Érigés En France à La Gloire de Louis XV: Précédés d'un Tableau Du Progrès Des Arts & Des Sciences Sous Ce Règne, Ainsi Que d'une Description Des Honneurs & Des Monumens de Gloire Accordés Aux Grands Hommes ...*

Fig. 5.4

Location of primary nodes in relation to topography and existing settlements

(Author)

entries (Fig.5.5), and the garden plans of a number of significant estates of the period such as Marly le Roi (Fig.2.8).[46] These examples serve as proxies for the missing detail in L'Enfant's own work and in each example, reflect the scale, orientation and combination of spaces shown in the plan (Fig.4.19). This comparison, developed in the following section, enables a more fulsome understanding of how the new Federal City might have been understood as a potential urban settlement. Furthermore, it provides a suitable context for the introduction of monumental public spaces within a republican context and reveals how motifs of formal garden design were brought to the centre of American civic life.

The Monumental Core

Evidence of L'Enfant's intentions in his reports to Washington provide moments of insight into the variety of public programme and the character of the monumental core but these are often articulated as a means to increase land value, 'combined to command the height price in a sale' as much as they are expressed as a grand vision for a new city 'unparalleled in point of beauties.'[47] The grand avenue that was at the heart of the symbolic order of the plan was only one part of a wider setting for the institutional life of the Federal City. It has since become home to the museums and monuments of the National Mall, however, such a swathe of green is antithetical to L'Enfant's intentions, as he was rooted in a quite different and more highly differentiated tradition of the ceremonial city than that of his City Beautiful inheritors. L'Enfant's description of this key trajectory may be difficult to interpret precisely, however the designated scale and shape of open spaces flanking and bisecting the grand avenue, the frequency and orientation of paths, streets and avenues, and the parks associated with the Capitol and White House that bracket it, suggest a complex arrangement of part monumental, part commercial life along the central spine of the Federal City. When understood in close comparison with contemporaneous spaces in Paris, the nature of this layering of activity and settings becomes apparent.

[46] Benoit and Wilson, "Jefferson and Marly: Complex Influences."
[47] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 40.

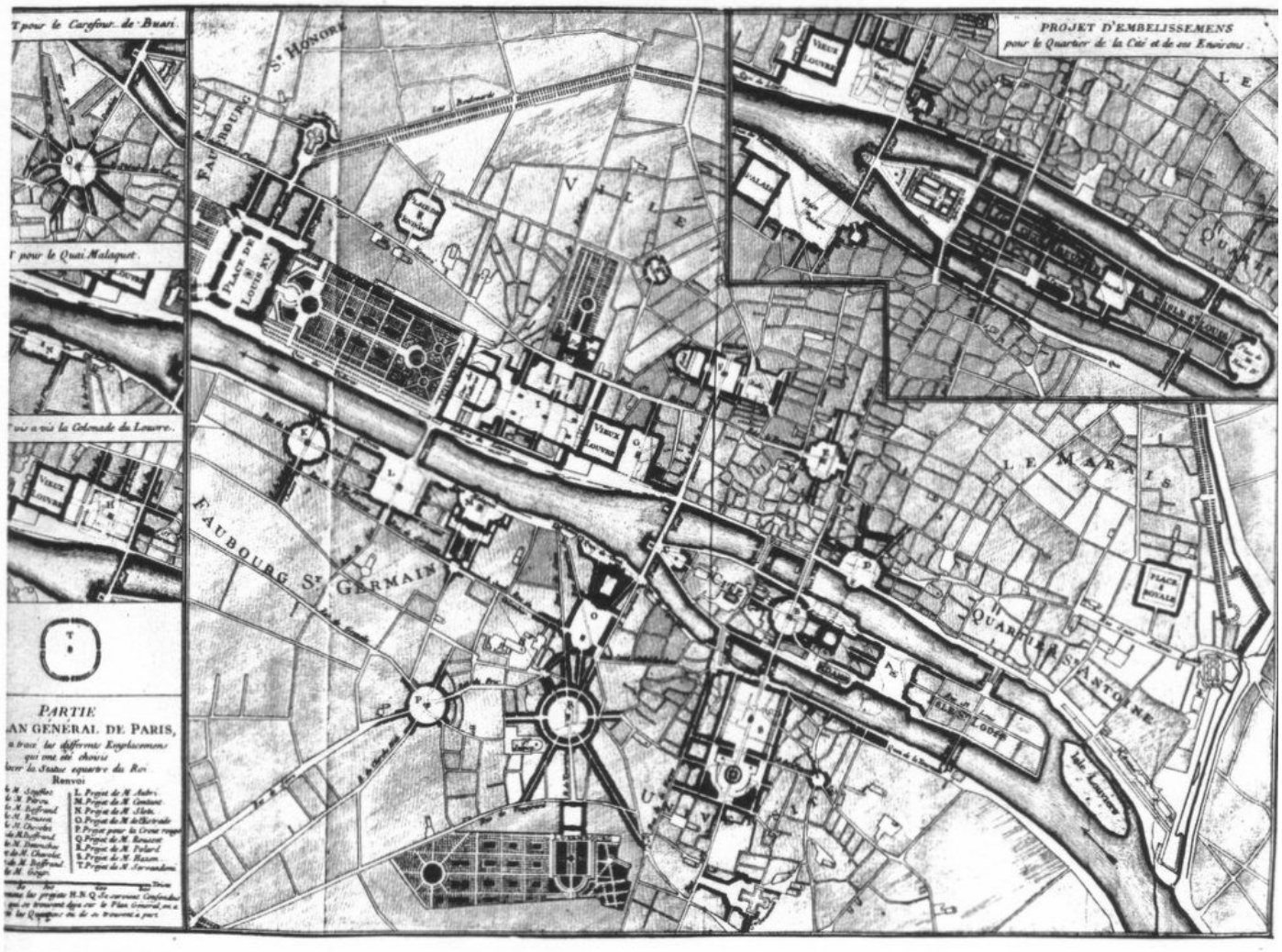


Fig. 5.5

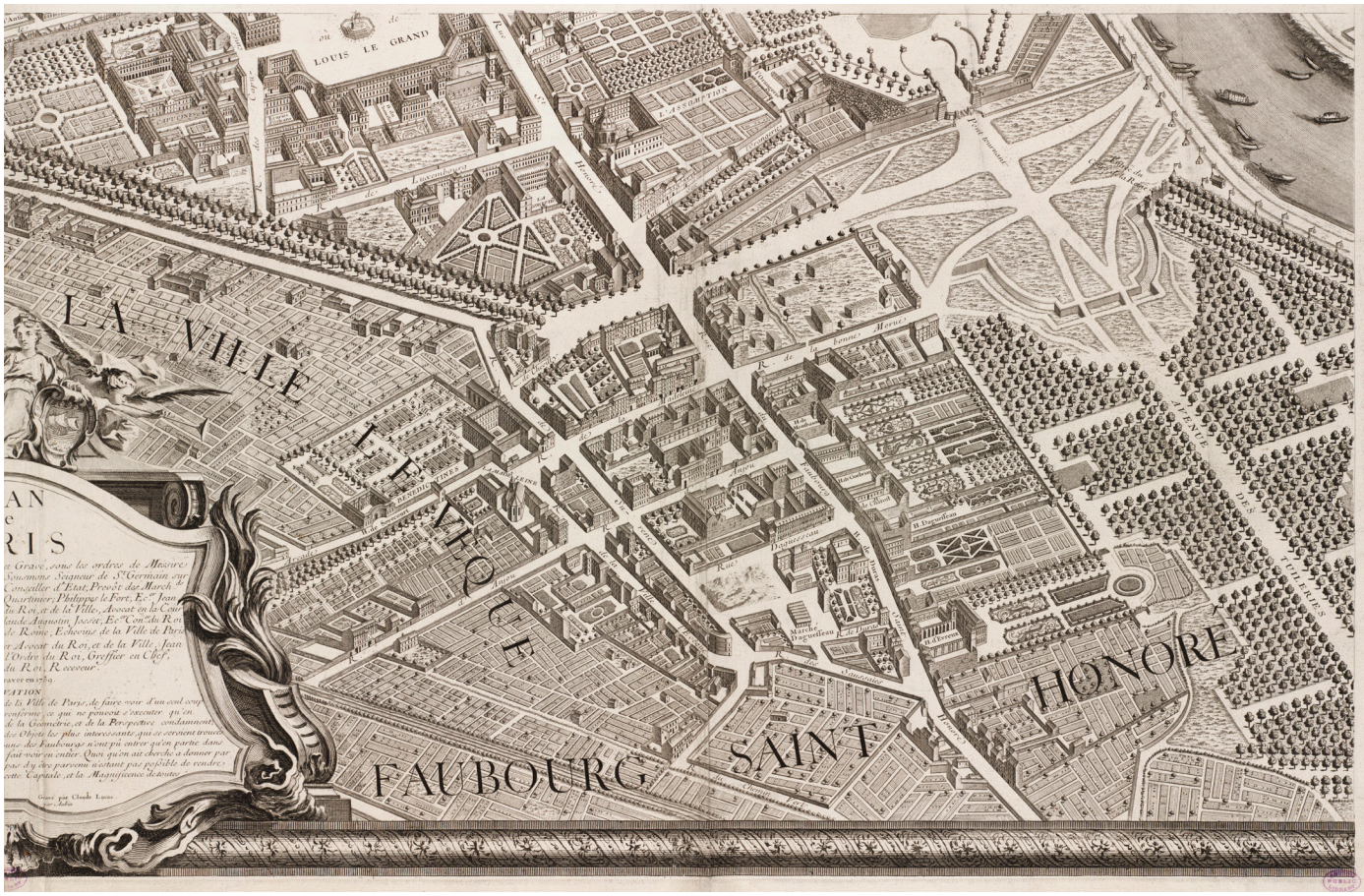
Plan for Paris

Pierre Patte, 1765
Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection
The University of Texas at Austin

L'Enfant's three overarching observations on the 1791 plan describe the setting out of significant buildings and public spaces, of diagonal avenues, and of the orthogonal street pattern that unites the two objectives. The first observations prioritise the placement of 'Grand Edifices' on an 'advantageous ground' – this note thereby supporting the importance of the long view and an orientation to the wider landscape as noted above (Fig.5.4).[48] This is then reinforced by the second explanatory note, in which L'Enfant introduces the importance of 'reciprocity of sight' but also, in line with the importance of the extended perspective, cites the need to 'to connect the separate and most distant objects with the principal.'[49] The third note introduces the use of a finer grain of block configuration, set as a fluctuating grid of streets, to unify the intersection of avenues, primary edifices and public squares. If we are to read these introductory notes as indicating an order of importance, then we can assume that L'Enfant did indeed organise the plan according to the placement of landmarks within an expansive landscape, weave these significant edifices together through a network of avenues that reinforced the vistas afforded by the primary topographic nodes of the plan, and then attempt to resolve the irregularities generated by this web and derive a diversity of neighbourhoods through the adjustment of the block pattern. L'Enfant's specific annotations to the plan and his accompanying reports to George Washington also describe a highly specific set of public squares.[50] These in turn have a suitable set of precedents that begin to suggest the character of place that L'Enfant may have envisaged.

L'Enfant's first keyed location is 'A', THE equestrian figure of GEORGE WASHINGTON. Not only was this never realised, but the statue was also completed almost a century later in 1860 (Clark Mills) and placed in Washington Circle. While L'Enfant's enthusiasm for his patron did not persevere in this case, the position of the monument indicates his assumptions about the primacy of the presidency in general, and of Washington in particular. Making the equestrian statue the focal point of the two axes of the branches of government, L'Enfant aligned the ceremonial expression of power with that of the *places royales* in France.[51] The equestrian monument evoked the

[48] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[49] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings.
[50] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 39, 43–44.
[51] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Régime*.


LOUIS LE GRAND
LA VILLE
L'EVESQUE
FAUBOURG
SAINT
HONORÉ

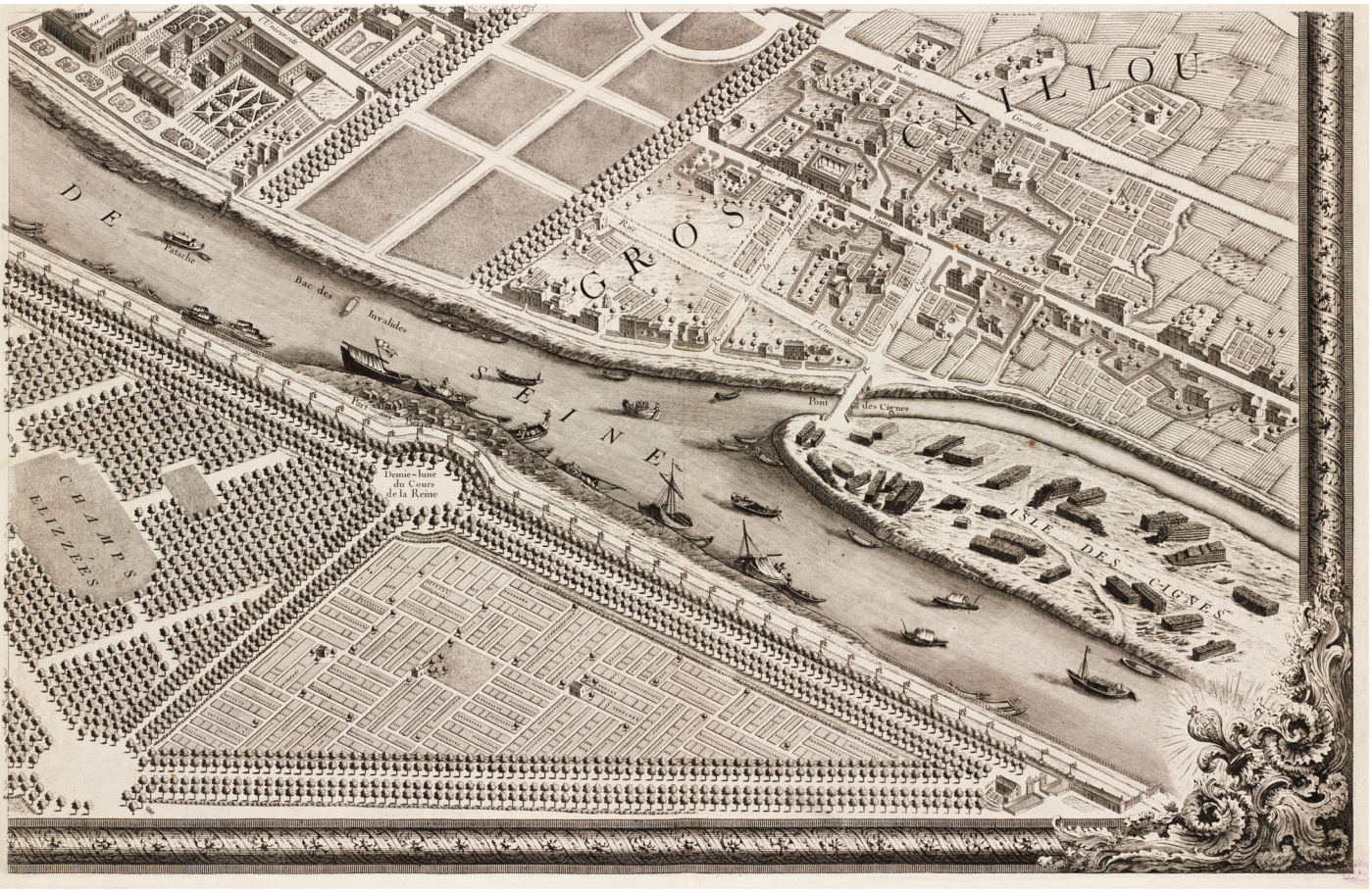


Fig. 5.6

Turgot Map Detail

Louis Bretez
1734-36
Norman B. Leventhal Map Center,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=66408430

continuity of centralised authority, exemplified by a long line of precedents such as the statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitoline hill in Rome and the extensive tradition of the form.[52] The publication of Patte's coordination of competition entries for the Place de la Concorde, and the available seventeenth century examples of *places royales* that had been constructed in cities such as Marseilles under the reign of Louis XIV[53] suggest the character of the setting that may have informed L'Enfant's design of this critical junction in the Federal City plan.

Such precedents provide an indication of L'Enfant's intentions for the ceremonial spaces of the new city but also embed his work within the emerging canon of urban planning. If, as Antoine Picon suggests in his review of the architecture of the French Enlightenment, it was the work of Laugier and Blondel, and the publication of Patte's *Monuments érigés en France à la gloire de Louis XV and Mémoires sur les objets les plus importants de l'architecture* that introduced city planning as a subject for theorisation in the second half of the eighteenth century,[54] L'Enfant's work may thus be read as an early response to published strategies for urban improvements in France alongside a longer tradition of garden and landscape design. Such improvements, both in Paris and in peripheral cities were customarily initiated through the laying out of a *place royal*. This not only extended the symbolic reach of the King but also exercised his authority in instigating the radical transformation of the urban public realm. Such projects were not new or exclusive to France. The substantial transformation of Rome under the auspices of Popes such as Julius II (1443-1513), Sixtus V (1521-1590) and Alexander VII (1599-1655) altered the city in a manner that stretched far beyond the setting for individual buildings.[55] Projects in Rome over this period established processional, ceremonial orders carving through the ancient and medieval fabric of the town. These incisions through the city, and the formal settings excavated from the urban grain, were a strong influence on the development of cites throughout Europe. The *place* in French cities extends from this tradition and was more immediately available to L'Enfant as a point of reference.

[52] McClellan, "The Life and Death of a Royal Monument"; Ziskin, "The Place de Nos Conquêtes and the Unraveling of the Myth of Louis XIV."
[53] Konvitz, "Grandeur in French City Planning under Louis XIV Rochefort and Marseille."
[54] Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment*, 87.
[55] Krautheimer, *The Rome of Alexander VII, 1655-1667*; Frommel, "Papal Policy: The Planning of Rome during the Renaissance."

Elbert Peets identifies site 'A' as a third point in the triangulation between the White House and Capitol buildings which he believed to be based on the space between the Château, and the Grand Trianon at Versailles. In his piece for the *Town Planning Review* Peets interprets the statue as a device for reinforcing the axes of the two primary buildings and making their orientation visually accessible.[56] However, the correspondence between the orientation and interconnection of buildings at Versailles and that of L'Enfant's monumental core simply does not exist despite Peets' proportional calculations. At Versailles there is no direct avenue between the Château and the Grand Trianon and neither is there a visible point to pin the cross axis of the canal that would correspond to the place of the equestrian monument in Washington.

Versailles may be important for the wider understanding of the configuration of avenues evident in the L'Enfant plan, and the evolving tradition of landscape and garden design, but it is an unreliable precedent. The parallels between the plan for the Federal City and Versailles have been exaggerated, this exaggeration amplified by the twentieth century re-formation of the monument core by the McMillan Commission. Peets himself was highly critical of the relationship of the McMillan plan to L'Enfant's intentions and he provided an extensive speculative study of potential qualities of public space inferred by L'Enfant's work. These studies make scant mention of this punctuated end of L'Enfant's 'Grand Avenue,'and only a passing mention of the position of the equestrian statue is included in his 1922 publication of 'The American Vitruvius.'[57] In this piece Peets suggests that the arrangement may refer to the intersection of the Place Louis XV (Place de la Concorde) and the axis of the Madeleine in Paris. The comparison brings the primary positioning of a statue celebrating the new leader of the American republic in line with the reinforcement of authority expressed in the monarchical reorganisation of cities in France in the eighteenth century.

Richard L Cleary's extensive study of the *place royale* type under the reign of Louis XIV and XV is of vital importance to understanding the importance of this urban form.[58] He treats the introduction of these squares as a means of opening up the medieval urban fabric, introducing a new scale of ceremonial space to the city, and interweaving commercial, institutional and landscape spaces through the common

[56] Peets, "L'Enfant's Washington."
[57] Hegemann, Peets, and Collins, *The American Vitruvius: An Architects' Handbook of Urban Design*.
[58] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Régime*.


2
1
4
Champs
Elisées

Fig. 5.7
Critical references on Jaillot Plan
1. Place Louis le Grand, 2. Place de la Madeleine, 3. Place Ste Geneviève, 4. Place Louis XV

Jaillot
1775
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:1775_Plan_de_Jaillot.jpg#filelinks

device of the formal setting. He classifies the type into four core categories: *places* that were to serve as government centres, those incorporating the civic life of the town through their relationship to theatres and academies, those embedded in the commercial fabric; and those that are set within a park or garden beyond the dense centre of the city. Even more critically, he notes that

> 'Places Royales further contrasted with their surroundings by inverting the traditional high density of French cities and offered a model of organization that dispersed growth around a series of designated spaces rather than by layering it around a dense central core'[59]

- this providing a direct echo of L'Enfant's intention to develop the Federal City through multiple centres.

The examples that Cleary presents provide a critical reference point for many of the open spaces found in the L'Enfant plan however, with regard to the President's Park and the placement of the equestrian statue to George Washington, the development of what was to become the Place de la Concorde is the most relevant. For Abbé Laugier, this celebrated new square was not considered a true *place*. Writing in 1765 he complained,

> 'it is not one of the city's crossroads, it does not even appear to be within the city walls. Surrounded by gardens and bosquets, it merely suggests an embellished esplanade in the midst of an agreeable countryside from which various palaces can be seen in the distance.'[60]

The same could be said of site 'A', placed as it is at the end of the plan for the city with half of its formal arrangement truncated by the Potomac River and the unsettled shore beyond.

While the situation in Paris was not so extreme, the site of the Place Louis XV along the esplanade of the Seine was unusually remote and unbounded (Fig.5.6, 5.7). Attempts to stimulate an instantaneous urbanity had been exercised before at the Place Louis le

[59] Cleary, 109.
[60] Cleary, 8.

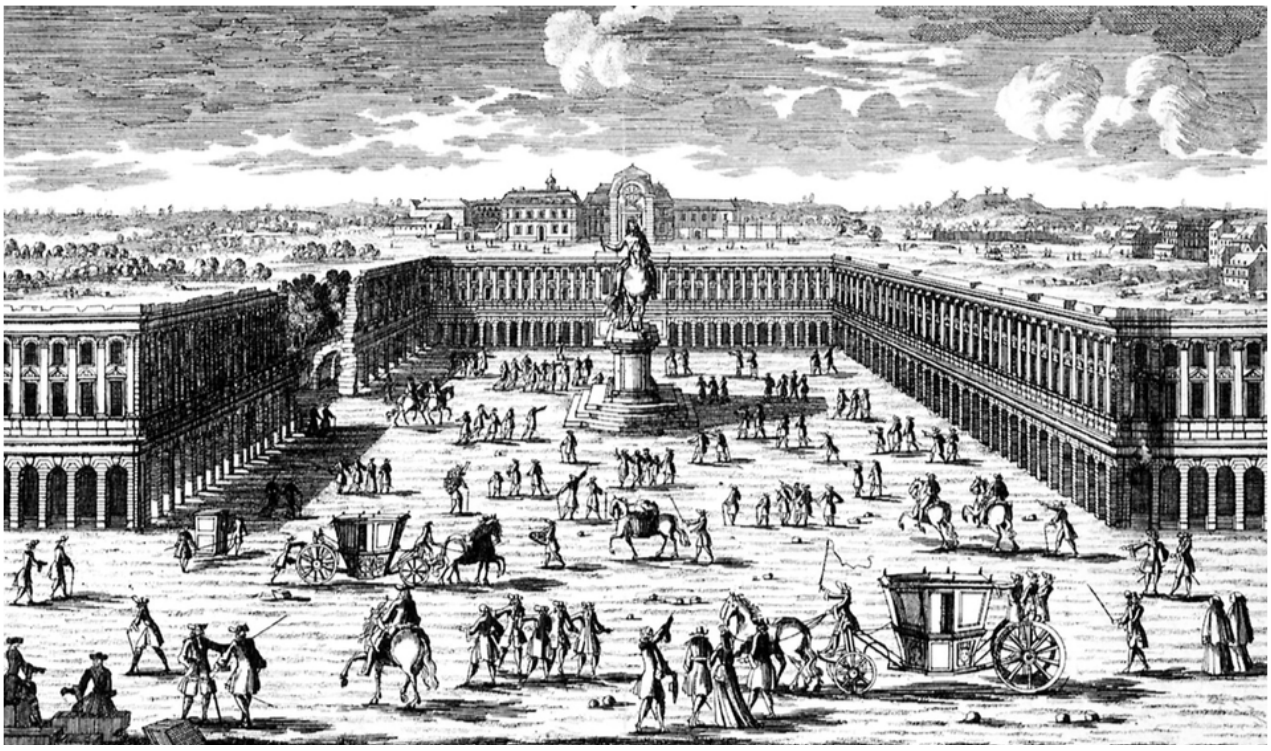


Fig. 5.8

Vue et perspective de la place de Louis le Grand

1685
Differents plans relatifs au projet de Bibliothèque du Roi,
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

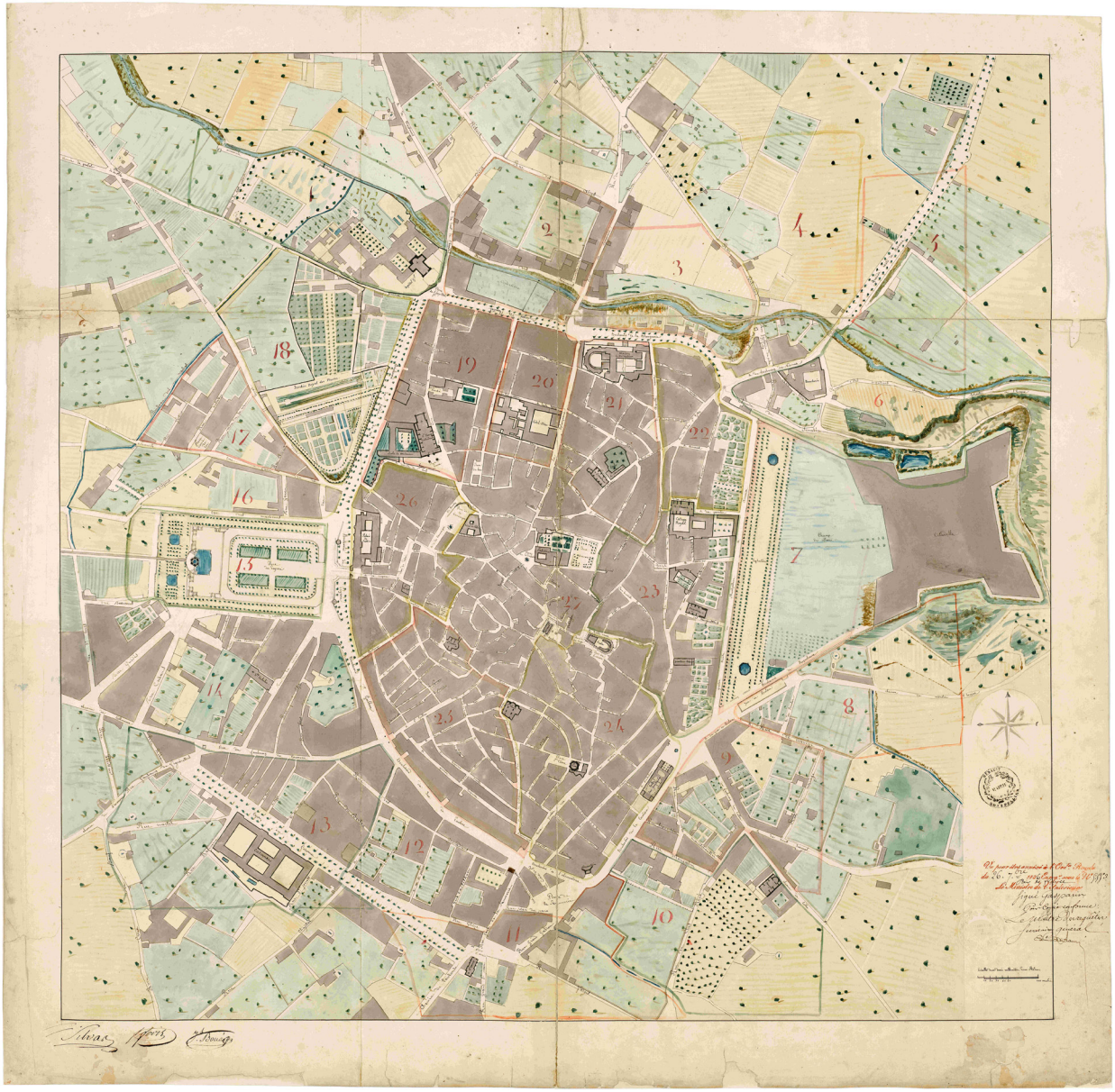


Fig. 5.9

Plan au 1/2000 du centre de Montpellier,
see notation No. 13

Fovis, Boué et semble-t-il Silvas, 1825
Archives municipales de Montpellier

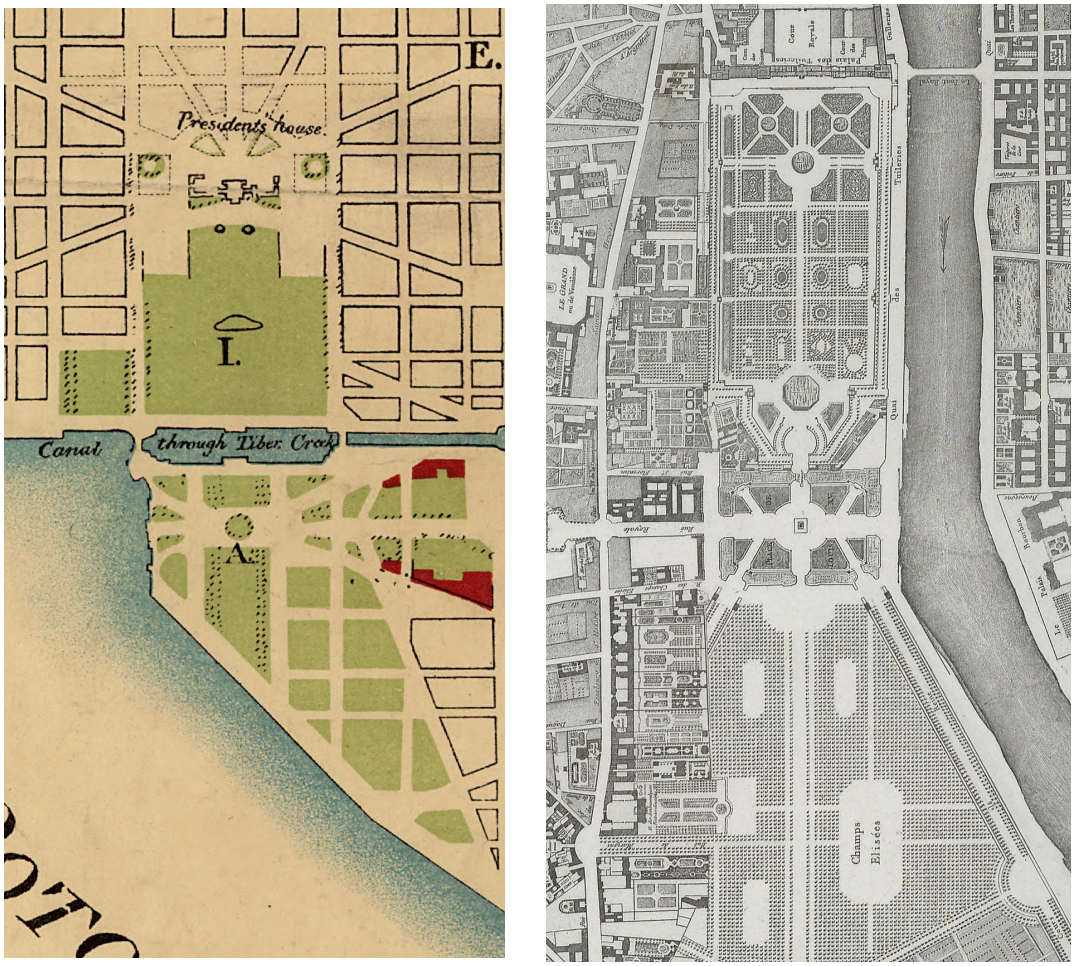


Fig. 5.10

Comparison of Presidents Park and Champs Elysées (see also Figs. 0.4 & 0.8)

(Author)

Grand (now Vendôme).[61] The site had been laid out at the beginning of the eighteenth century but the development of any more than an enclosing façade awaiting infill had proved expensive and halting (Fig.5.8). The site to the west of the Tuilleries, that was to become the Place de la Concorde was much larger and bisected by the main axis through to the Champs Élysées making attempts at an enclosure ill-advised.

The openness of the square was unusual but not unprecedented. Cleary cites the Place Royale (Place du Peyrou) at Montpellier (Fig.5.9), which was located beyond the city walls on a promontory, the view from which provided 'no small reminder of the scope of the monarch's authority.'[62] Given the predominant orientation of Federal City plan towards the distant view and L'Enfant's emphasis on a need to 'command the most agreeable prospects' it is likely that the importance of such an exposed position would have been apparent to L'Enfant. He would also have been aware of the contemporary development of Paris west of the Louvre. At the time of the original competition for the Place Louis XV in 1748, the Champs Élysées and the Cours la Reine had already been established as promenades, the former being formalised by LeNôtre in 1667 following his rebuilding of the gardens of the Tuileries.[63] The Turgot plan of 1739 shows the esplanade between the two as traversed with tracks linking more established thoroughfares (Fig.5.6). The cross axis that was formed by the introduction of Bouchardon's equestrian statue of Louis XV dignified the Place as a critical crossing of established ceremonial routes and created a transition between the gardens of the Tuileries and the parkland beyond. The scale and configuration of the garden, square and park are strikingly similar to that of the President's Park, monument site, and 'well-improved field' (*champ*) beyond (Fig.5.10).

When viewed at the same scale, the distance between the respective equestrian statues and the gates of Louvre as depicted in the 1775 Jaillot plan of Paris, and the southern elevation of the White House, are equivalent (within the margin of error dictated by the distortion of the plan). Furthermore, the Cours la Reine follows a similar angle down the Seine to that of the avenue forming the south-eastern edge of L'Enfant's 'field'(Fig.5.10). The similarity to the line of the Seine is significant as it suggests an

[61] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Régime*.
[62] Cleary, 112.
[63] McClellan, "The Life and Death of a Royal Monument."

equivalence of scale, and insight into L'Enfant's expectation of the ceremonial grounds of the city.

The modulation from edifice-to garden-to park, using a monument as a critical vector within a larger plan, is a repeated motif. L'Enfant built relationships between projected pockets of activity, through the positioning of formal, civic and landscape settings. The extended view and the monuments, columns and fountains that were planned to mark intervals along the length of this trajectory support the legibility of the plan. These devices reinforce the ambition to weave disparate parts of the projected settlement together sufficiently enough for the city to grow uniformly across its extent. In this respect the way in which avenues move across open squares and terminate in either civic spaces or points within the wider landscape enable the city to be understood as a whole while reinforcing recognisable symbolic hierarchies. It is unfortunate that the uninterrupted perspective, or open vista, that these lines of sight establish have become so dominant in the interpretation of the plan to the exclusion of a closer examination of the configuration of the spaces that punctuate them.

The reconfiguration of the Mall in the early twentieth century, as part of the McMillan Commission's reworking of the larger monumental core and surrounding landscape, prompted the most intensive interrogation of L'Enfant's intentions. The *tapis vert* that now characterises the ceremonial centre of the city, emerged from this investigation, but was coloured by the preoccupations of the concurrent City Beautiful movement.[64] The overriding desire to recover a degree of dignity for the city centre which had been encroached upon by incremental and chaotic development, and a sprawling transport infrastructure, drove the direction of the work (Fig.5.11). The opening up of shared public space was central to this initiative. Glenn Brown summarised his understanding of L'Enfant's objectives as heavily reliant on his experience of Paris in general, and the example of the Champs Elysees in particular, in his speech to the Columbia Historical Society in 1902.[65] He reframed these influences on the space of the Mall as producing an intention for an open spread of parkland rather than the complex network of civic spaces that the original plan and its annotations suggest. Brown interprets L'Enfant's vision for a:

[64] Hines, "The Imperial Mall: The City Beautiful Movement and the Washington Plan of 1901 - 1902."
[65] Brown, "The Making of a Plan for Washington City."

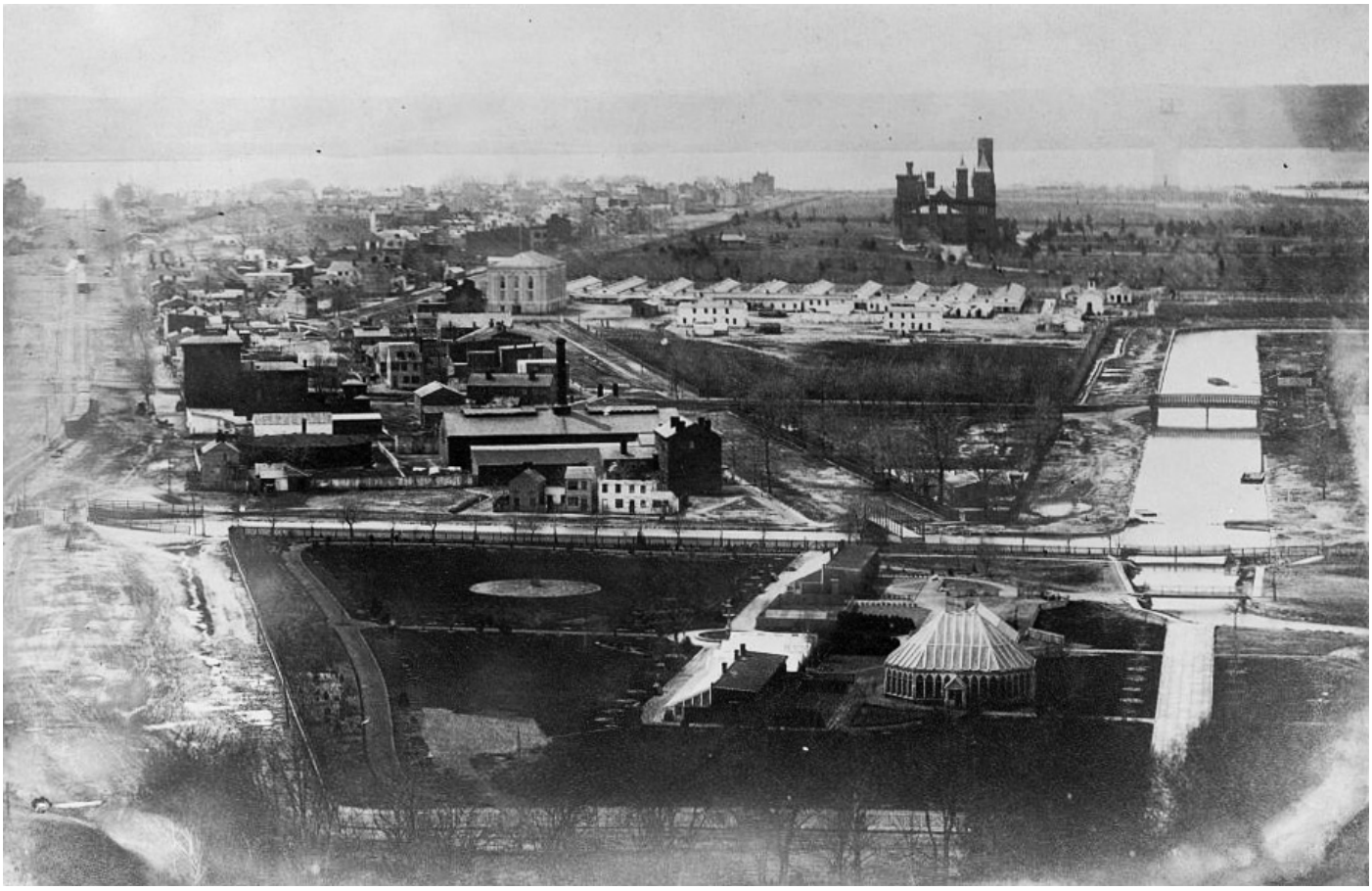


Fig. 5.11

Looking west-southwest at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in the U.S. in 1863.

1863
https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00653031/
Library of Congress

> 'Grand Avenue, 400 feet in breadth, and about a mile in length, bordered with gardens, ending in a slope from the houses on each side' as a 'green sward, 400 feet wide…bounded on both sides by parks 600 feet wide, laid out by a skilled landscape architect and adorned by the work of capable artists.'[66]

This shift from 'avenue' to 'green sward' does more than disturb the original direction of the plan, it inverts its orientation from a structured boulevard bordered by the gardens of residences similar to those of the Faubourg St Honoré that backed onto the Champs Elysees, towards a broad park punctuated with pavilions as it now stands. There would appear to be little ambiguity in L'Enfant's description, but subsequent interpretations have prioritised the ability of this central set-piece to harmonize and coordinate the public spaces stemming from it. The focus of the plan around the Grande Avenue was also important to L'Enfant, pressing as he was in his report to George Washington of 22 June for it to connect the:

> 'several squares or area such as are intended for the Judiciary Court - the national bank - the grand church - the play house - market and exchange - all through will offer a variety of situation unparalleled in point of beauties - suitable to every purpose.'[67]

The grain of the avenue and the spaces flanking it in the 1791 plan, however, do little to suggest the park and structured landscape described by Brown, or articulated in the McMillan Commission Plan.

Pierre L'Enfant's annotations describe a clear succession of spaces from the Capitol (Federal House) to the location of the Washington monument. At the eastern end this sequence is marked by the raised forecourt of the Capitol, the 'Grande Cascade' detailed in reference 'F' and the 1200 foot 'public walk' at it base. These components of the plan borrow most clearly from the grand cascade at Peterhof (Fig.5.12)[68] and the Places des Armes at Versailles. The two are similar in scale and share a relationship with their settings akin to that of the L'Enfant plan (Fig.5.13). What follows to the west appears to be a central tree-lined avenue similar in width to the primary axis of the Champs

[66] Brown, *Papers Relating to the Improvement of the City of Washington, District of Columbia*, 9.
[67] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 39.
[68] Cross, "Russian Gardens, British Gardeners."

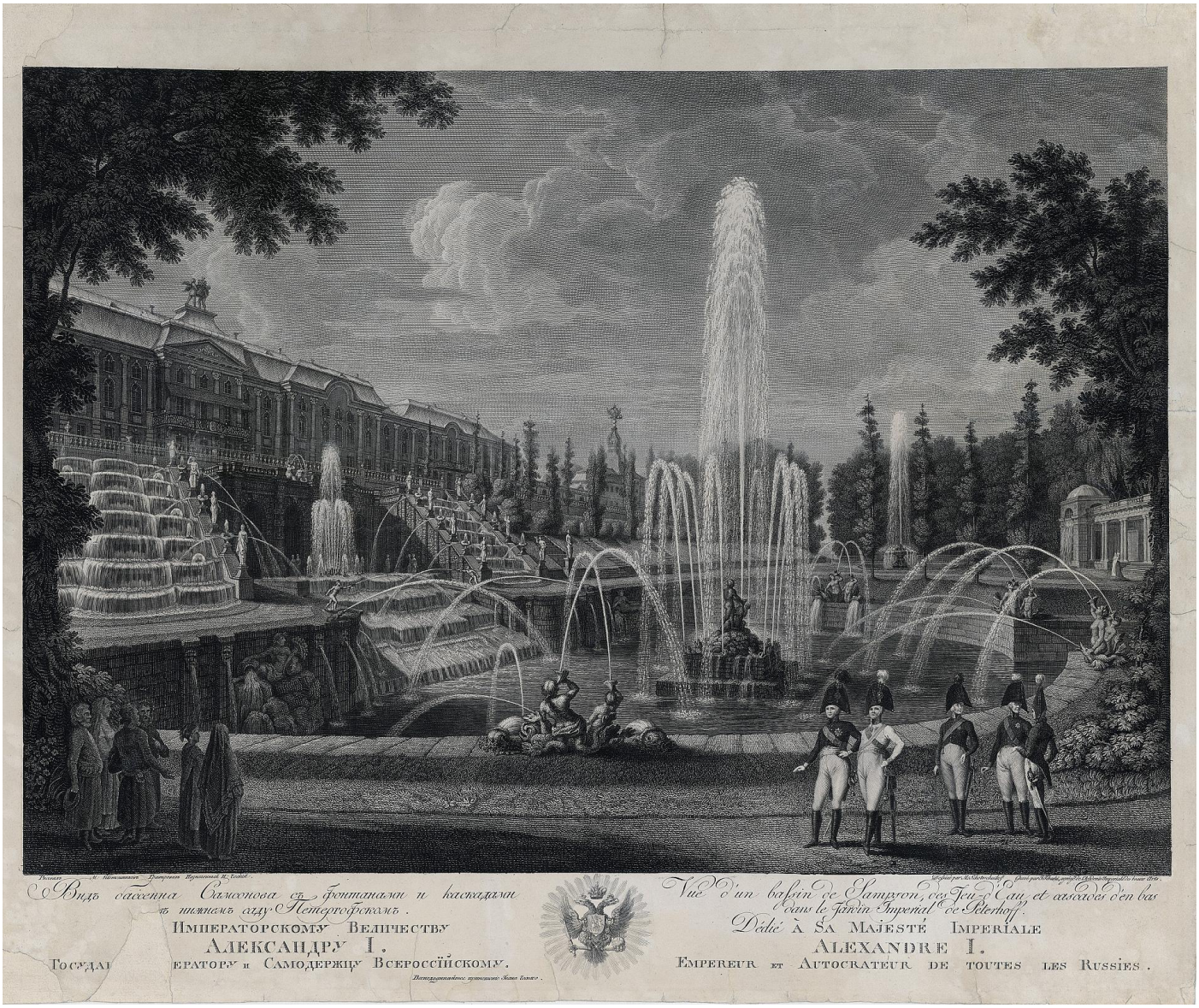


Fig. 5.12

View of the Grand Cascade, Samson Fountain and the Grand Palace in Peterhof

Chesky, Ivan,1777-1848
early 19th century engraving

Elysees. However, unlike this field, the spaces adjacent to the avenue are shown as fragmented, lined by the subdivisions of the block formed by cross streets and notional boundaries between the gardens extending from the houses that face outwards towards the city north and south. These blocks are then articulated across the length of the avenue at critical intersections, to form squares of a size and configuration comparable to various Parisian *places.* Such a reading offers an important alternative to the twentieth-century green sward and suggests a complex urban metabolism projected for the core of the new city. In this case, the avenue was much less likely to have been flanked by a consistent garden-scape but rather populated by the diverse configurations associated with the houses facing the canal and what is now Independence Ave.

The subdivisions of structures along the outer edge of what is now the Mall are not clearly articulated in the plan and neither is a clear boundary between the public realm of the Avenue and the private garden expressed. However, taking the edge between the Champs Elysees and the gardens of the Hôtels of the Faubourg St Honoré as a model, one can deduce the character of L'Enfant's 'gardens' as they descended the 'slope from the houses on each side'. The relationship described here is speculative, but it provides an essential link to the evolution of the relationship between public and private space in eighteenth-century Paris. And while we must remember that L'Enfant was not highly trained in architecture or the planning of gardens, he will have been aware of new developments in the city from his time enrolled in the *Academie* in 1771 through to his departure from France in 1777. Furthermore, while we may assume that L'Enfant could only have been looking over the shoulders of the significant architectural figures at the time, Thomas Jefferson was explicitly conversant in the debates surrounding the configuration of gardens and the development of cities.[69] Indeed, not only is this apparent in his letters from France but from 1785 Jefferson was resident at the Hôtel de Langeac, which sat at the 'grille des champs Elysees, but within the city' on the corner the Rue de Berri, with 'a clever garden to it.'[70] Such an address would have put Jefferson in direct contact with the emergent relationship between the private gardens of the Hôtels to the east of his residence and the public promenade into the city.

[69] Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson and the Creation of the American Architectural Image."
[70] Hornberger et al., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson.*, 3:472–73.

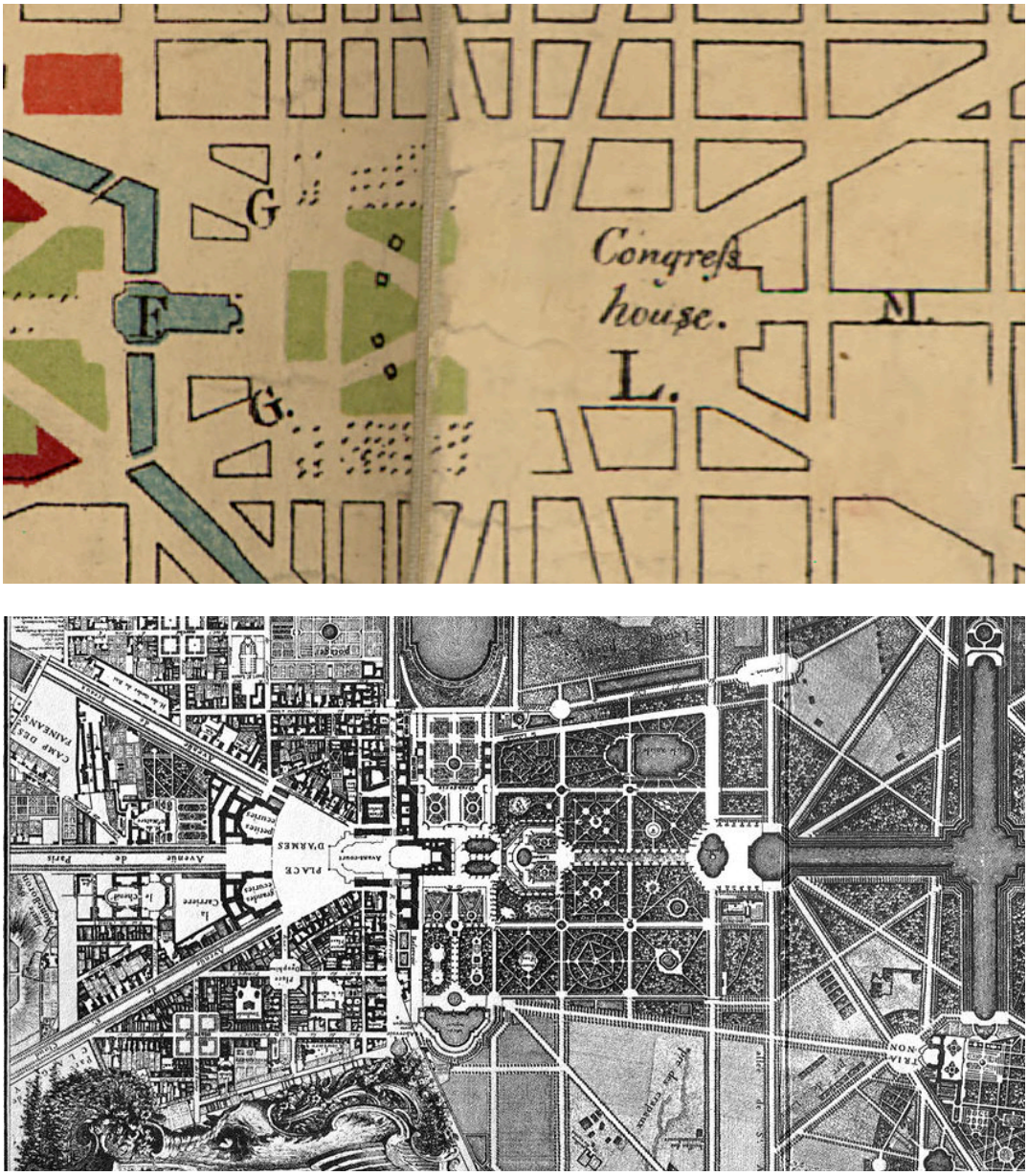


Fig. 5.13

Capitol grounds scale comparison to Map of Versailles

Jean Delagrive, 1746
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=725764

According to Wiebenson, the private residences such as Boullée's Hôtel Brunoy (1772) that formed the district of speculative development along the north side of the Champs Elysees were configured to produce 'the illusion of largeness' akin to the more generous suburban landscapes of bigger estates.[71] She notes that the 'gardens of the houses faced the park and by the 1770's they were fenced with iron grilles so that the private property might appear to extend unobstructed into the public space.'[72] The correlation of the private residence with the public walk is not a certain model for the relationship of L'Enfant's Grand Avenue, but it aligns with the detail of the plan annotation, as well as the financial emphasis of much of the explanatory notes in his reports to Washington. In his description of the unifying effect of the avenue with the surrounding squares he speaks of the 'unparalleled in point of beauties' and of spaces 'combined to command the height price in a sale.'[73] Certainly, the availability of such strategically placed residences, backing onto the Champs Elysées, to the wider enjoyment of the public at leisure through the visibility of their gardens, may have informed L'Enfant's work. Wiebenson suggests, that as this ability to look into, and over, the park, boulevard or wider city, became prevalent through examples such as the Hôtels Monaco, de Condé, Masserano and Tamnay, 'the dividing line between public and private grew thinner, Paris became a spectacle for the private citizen, much as the rural countryside had become a spectacle for his land-owing counterpart.[74] As this relationship was inherently reflexive, the opening up of the private garden to the public walk also integrated the private residence into the experience of the public citizen.

Such observations and nuanced detail may not appear to affect the larger ambitions of the 1791 Federal City plan, but they offer an important example of the degrees of 'reciprocity of sight'[75] inherent at multiple scales in the planning of the city. This suggests a more complex relationship between state and citizen, institution and public than the direct connection provided by primary avenues. The pattern established along the central avenue may be regarded as a unifying element for the network of squares and public buildings to the north and south. The plan suggests that L'Enfant was imagining

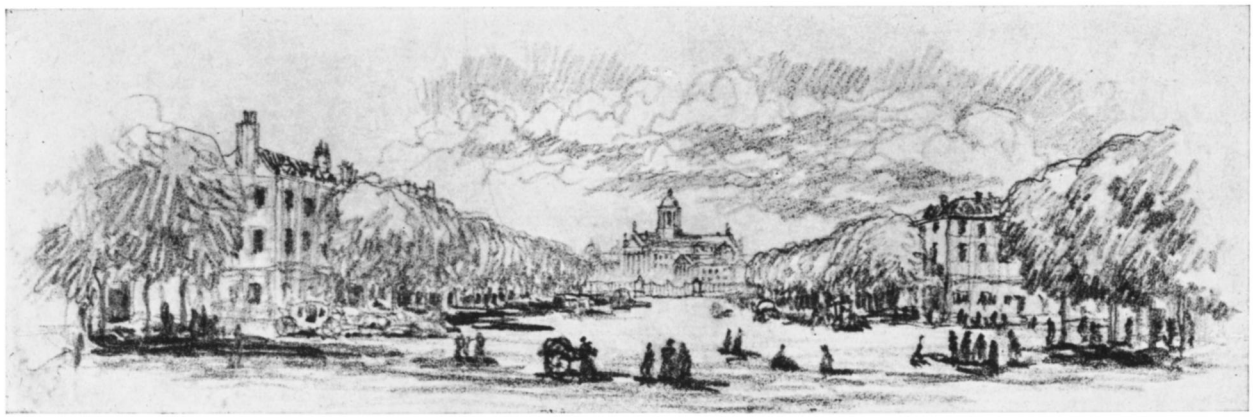
[71] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*, 113.
[72] Wiebenson, 112.
[73] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 40.
[74] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*, 113.
[75] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 33.

a ceremonial sequence correlated to bring together the political heart of the capital and the commercial life along the canal.

Elbert Peets' speculative reconstruction of these spaces in his 1930 piece 'On the Mutilations of L'Enfant's Plan' and his 1932 essay, 'Washington as L'Enfant Intended It' provides a particularly helpful visualisation of how these larger squares might have been configured, and a suggestion of what precedents L'Enfant may have been drawing upon.[76] Peet's outlook may have been coloured by the concurrent development of the Mall and Federal Triangle, and his sketches 'meant only as points of departure for your imagination,'[77] but his research is extensive and his outlook broad. Peets' places particular emphasis on the role of the canal and the spaces that flank it. For Peets this device is 'at once serene, romantic, picturesque, entertaining, and economical'[78] each of these characteristics pertaining to openings in the plan from that surrounding the proposed Pantheon, possible academies, playhouses and markets.

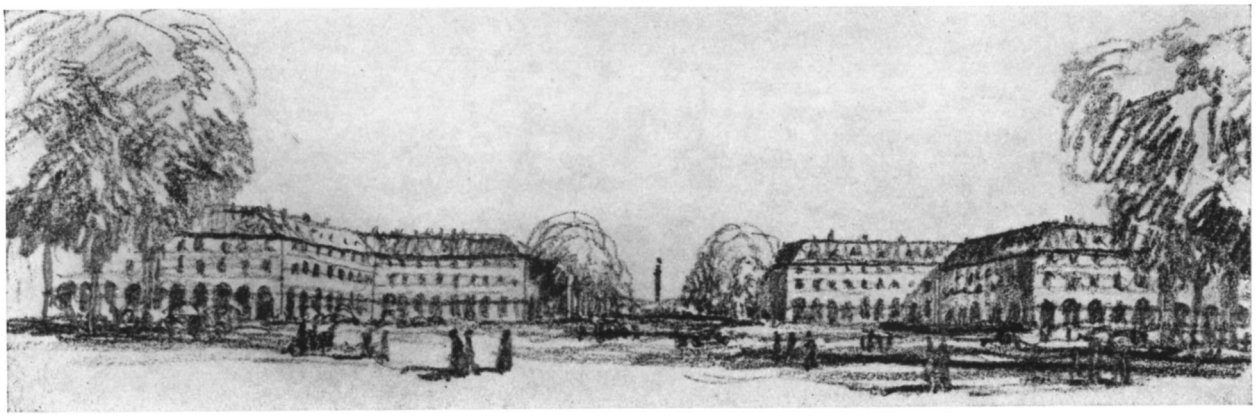
A large part of Peets' work focused on four principle open spaces; the square adjoining the Capitol to the east, a large opening where Garfield Park now stands, the stretch from the Pantheon to the canal, and the distinct widening of 12th St south of the Grand Avenue.[79] His drawings capture a speculative city from a low birds-eye view somewhere between the constructed perspective of L'Enfant's training and that from the airplane window which Peets foresaw as the future means for reading the order (or lack thereof) of the city.[80] These drawings show a leafy series of spaces enclosed by a built edge based on a Parisian model – their axes animated with an impression of the fountains, obelisks and market structures suggested in the plan (Fig.5.1, 5.14, 5.22). The scale suggested by these drawings is vast: dotted figures float in spaces that are fed by avenues of a scale reserved for only a small handful of areas of eighteenth-century European cities. While this may be a symptom of L'Enfant thinking 'en grande' or a somewhat indiscriminate celebration of every junction in the plan, the similarities of such spaces to specific and carefully orchestrated *places* suggest a more subtle reading.

[76] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*.
[77] Peets, 27.
[78] Peets, 27.
[79] Peets, "L'Enfant's Washington."
[80] Peets.



Architectural Record

FIG. 7. *WASHINGTON. The President's House from Pennsylvania Avenue*
L'Enfant's plan shows that he had in mind a building resembling Vanbrugh's Castle Howard



Architectural Record

FIG. 8. *WASHINGTON. Upper Capitol Square, with Itinerary Column in the distance*

Fig. 5.14

The Basin and Market on the East Branch of the Potomac

Elbert Peets 1933
L'Enfant's Washington The Town Planning Review Vol. 15, No. 3 (May, 1933), pp. 155-164 (11 pages)

The Ceremonial City

Setting aside the openings associated with the Capitol and White House, the spaces of the civic life of the city were placed on the three prominent north-south axes that were to intersect the Grand Avenue. Working east from the President's park, the line of 12th St. expands to create the largest opening along this primary axis. As drawn, this is a near exact version of the Place Louis le Grand with its northern end removed to form a clear opening to the canal (Fig 5.15). At the time of L'Enfant's departure from Paris, this Place was one of five *places royales,* of which only the Place Louis XV (Concorde) was located on an established ceremonial route.[81] Cleary's detailed account of the stuttering construction and financing of the square, and engravings of its various stages describe a design for a three-sided *place*, open to the Rue St. Honoré and constructed as continuous free-standing façade awaiting investment and future development.[82] The eventual enclosed perimeter and octagonal form may have maximised the financial function of the square but isolated it from the street, which according to Cleary, prevented it from becoming 'a focal point for the city's ceremonial calendar.'[83]

By contrast, while L'Enfant may or may not have been aware of the stages of construction of the Place Louis le Grand or familiar with its mixed financial fortunes, his own square not only opens to the canal which Peets imagines as a place of 'splendid water pageants and gay illuminations,'[84] but it is also cut through by the Grand Avenue. Thus, as the new square echoes established precedent, it departs from the model with two parallel channels of active processional opportunities while being cut on the cross axis by 12th St. which expands south to a width similar to that of a primary avenue. Building on the previous analysis of the President's Park and the character of the Grand Avenue, one can assume that the west side of the street provided the 'situations which command the most agreeable prospects and which are the best calculated for spacious houses and gardens such as may accommodate foreign ministers, &c' to which L'Enfant refers in annotation 'K'.

The coincidence of three ceremonial routes at 12th St. would have had exceptional significance for L'Enfant and is the clearest example of his orchestration of political

[81] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Regime*. (1699),
[82] Ziskin, "The Place de Nos Conquêtes and the Unraveling of the Myth of Louis XIV."
[83] Cleary, *The Place Royale and Urban Design in the Ancien Régime*, 208.
[84] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 27.

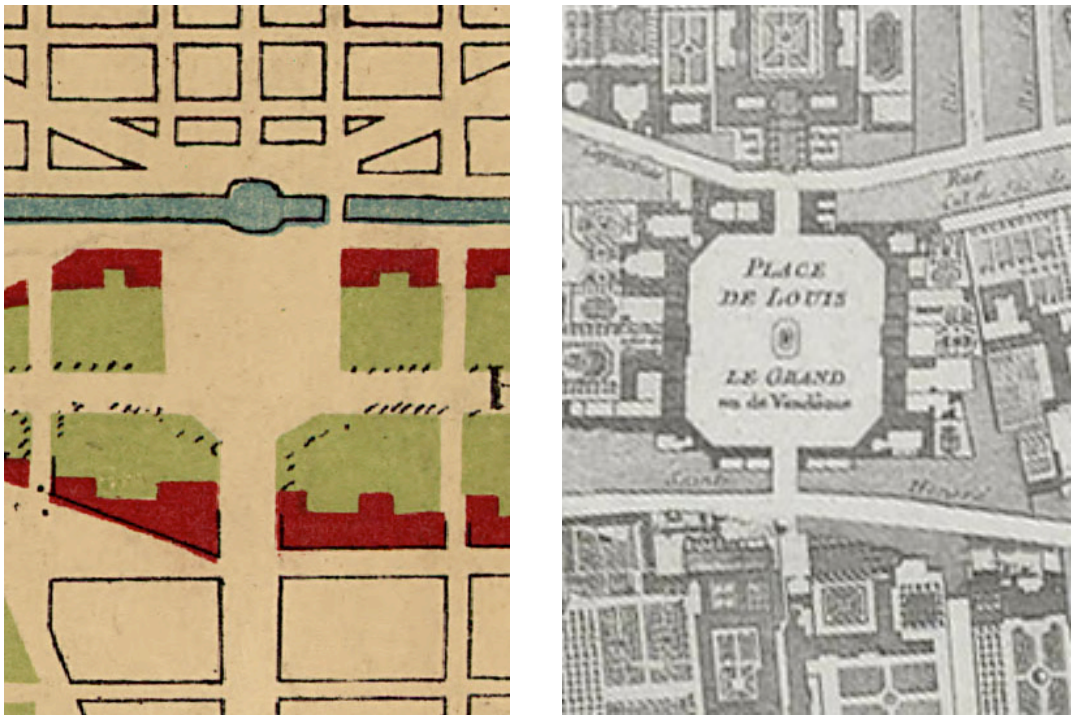


Fig. 5.15

12th St opening in comparison to Place Louis le Grand (detail Figs. 0.4 & 0.8)

theatre within the 1791 plan. Such an expression would have drawn on L'Enfant's experience designing banquets and ceremonial processions prior to his commission for the Federal City, and in the formulation of a symbolic language, albeit at the scale of ornamentation.[85] These celebrations were the basis for his reputation as although L'Enfant was commonly referred to an architect and engineer, there is no evidence of any formal education other than that obtained under his father's tuition at the *Académie*.[86] It is possible that he obtained some experience of planning over the course of the war, but his reputation was as a respected generalist. While Jusserand lauded L'Enfant as 'the factotum of the new nation' his account suggests that there was no viable competition for this work.[87]

It is apparent that L'Enfant's experience of orchestrating processions and recasting ceremonial spaces provided him with the authority to develop a new symbolic order that would be structured theatrically in celebration of the new nation. The prevailing sense of the theatrical characterises L'Enfant's reconfiguration and extension of Federal Hall in New York, and his preparations for the inauguration of George Washington, are dominated by repeated mention of swaths of cloth, curtains, draped chairs and painted ceilings (see Figs.3.2 & 3.3).[88] The scale and materiality of this decorative programme relate to L'Enfant's experience of choreographing banquets and processions and suggest a theatrical structuring of political ceremony more than a dominant architectural approach. Seen within this context, the plan for the Federal City is more patriotic stage-set than a coordinated representational programme. This comparison does not diminish its significance in the evolution of American cities but rather provides a useful means of readdressing L'Enfant's 1791 plan as part of a larger tradition of the framing of political authority as theatre.[89]

L'Enfant's theatricality relates to two core traditions, both of which underpin the plan for the Federal City - that of the formal order of the court, and that of the fête as exemplified by commemorative independence parades and their revolutionary parallels in France.[90] The influence of the latter is exemplified by the Constitution ratification

[85] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[86] Caemmerer; Kornwolf, *Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial North America*.
[87] Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington 1791-1792*, 4.
[88] Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*.
[89] Ravel and Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791*.
[90] Ozouf and Sheridan, *Festivals and the French Revolution*.

celebration that L'Enfant designed for New York.[91] This was devised as part festival, part military procession. It commenced with an artillery salute followed by a procession of notables and allegorical figures, unusually interspersed – foresters followed by the figure of Christopher Columbus; butchers, tanners and furriers preceded by an eight-year-old boy dressed as Bacchus; then a ship, a cake and finally the Constitution. This part whimsical, part symbolic array was a unique but already a legible part of popular culture.[92]

Emerging from an active and radical participation in revolutionary politics, festivals and processions were an essential part of American urban life. Their traditions had evolved out of the pre-war royalist celebrations and the frequent military displays of the colonial militias and bore a strong relationship to the formal ceremonial life of the French *Ancien Regime*. These would have been interspersed with the street presence of more domestic and commercial matters; tradesmen's' gatherings and funeral processions, as well the more the explicit re-enacting of American victory that typified moments such as the early Independence Day celebrations.[93] Over the course of the revolutionary period these ritual events had become less formal, and public gathering more common. In these instances, the commemorative dramatisation of political events was often interwoven into the ceremonial life of the town. This relationship was made explicit in the New York ratification procession, more so than in other celebrations such as that in Philadelphia which adopted a more sober approach.[94] While the perplexing array of characters that populated L'Enfant's New York procession may seem divorced from the formal geometry of his plan for the Federal City, the ceremonial role of the political life of the town had strong connections with the inferred use of L'Enfant's public squares such as the one at 12th St. (Fig.5.15) and the ritual participation in government that he envisaged for the institutional buildings laid out in the plan.

The formation of this distinctly American variety of pageantry, and the spaces associated with it, was conflated with L'Enfant's pervading experience of urban space as a receptacle for commemorative events. As these were accommodated by the *places royales* in Paris and regional cities in France, a parallel typology of civic space was

[91] Heideking, "The Federal Processions of 1788 and the Origins of American Civil Religion."
[92] Ozouf and Sheridan, *Festivals and the French Revolution*; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*.
[93] Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*.
[94] Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, 2010, 41.

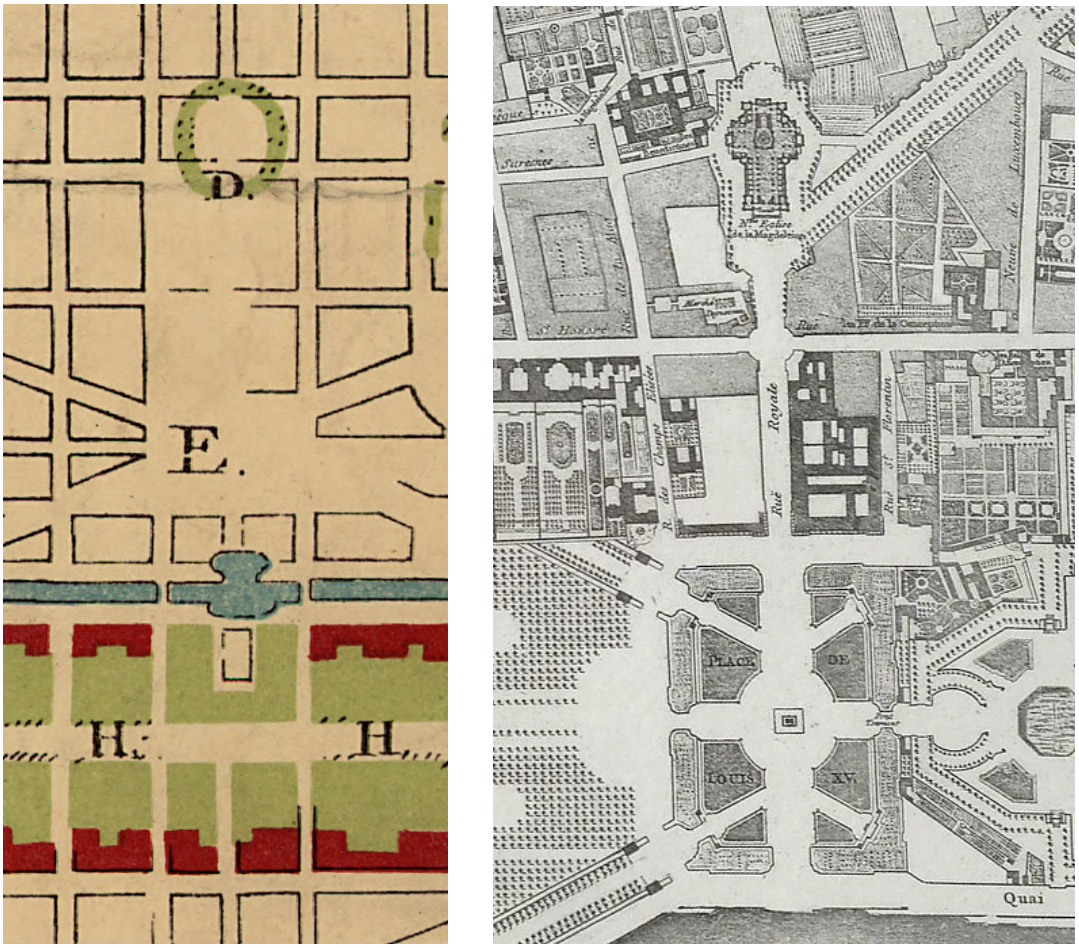


Fig. 5.16

Pantheon opening in comparison to Place de la Madeleine (detail Figs. 0.4 & 0.8)

taking shape. This was associated with what Wiebenson describes as a 'mushrooming of theatres and other recreational activities' after the signing of the 1763 Peace Treaty.[95] The sequence of squares aligning to the two further axes of 8th and 6th streets responds to these secondary layers of urban public life. The first of these is formed as a notable centre line between the White House and Capitol and is anchored by 'D' – a non-denominational Pantheon '…intended for national purposes, such as public prayer thanksgivings, funeral orations, &c.' L'Enfant goes on to describe it as 'a proper shelter for such monuments as were voted by the late Continental Congress, for those heroes who fell in the cause of liberty, and for such others as may hereafter be decreed by the voice of a grateful Nation.'[96] It is the most extensive specific annotation of the plan and here L'Enfant establishes a site for both the sacred commemoration of the revolution and a monument to future heroism.

Its structure sits in line with that of the President's House along E St., the alignment inferring an equivalence within the hierarchy of the plan (see Fig.4.19). Just as the White House is orientated towards the distant landscape to the south and positioned as a focal point for radiating avenues of the city towards the north, the Pantheon initiates a sequence of spaces within the fabric of the city down through 8th street. The street intersects with Pennsylvania Ave just north of the Canal, at what Peets terms 'a kind of clearing house for [L'Enfant's] vistas'[97] – a point at which the canal forms two small basins along the street axis, and continues across the Grand Avenue to run south through one of the most extensive state squares, culminating in 'C': 'a naval itinerary Column, proposed to be erected to celebrate the first rise of the navy, and to stand a ready monument to consecrate its progress and Achievements.'[98]

This axis of heroic veneration may have been influenced by the setting for Soufflot's Panthéon (1758-1790) which was under construction when L'Enfant departed for America in 1777. This is the plausible influence on such a structure, and one cited by Peets as acting as a model for not just the institution but for its position 'at the top of

[95] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*, 114.
[96] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."
[97] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 82.
[98] L'Enfant and United States Commissioner Of Public Buildings, "Plan of the City Intended for the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States: Projected Agreeable to the Direction of the President of the United States."

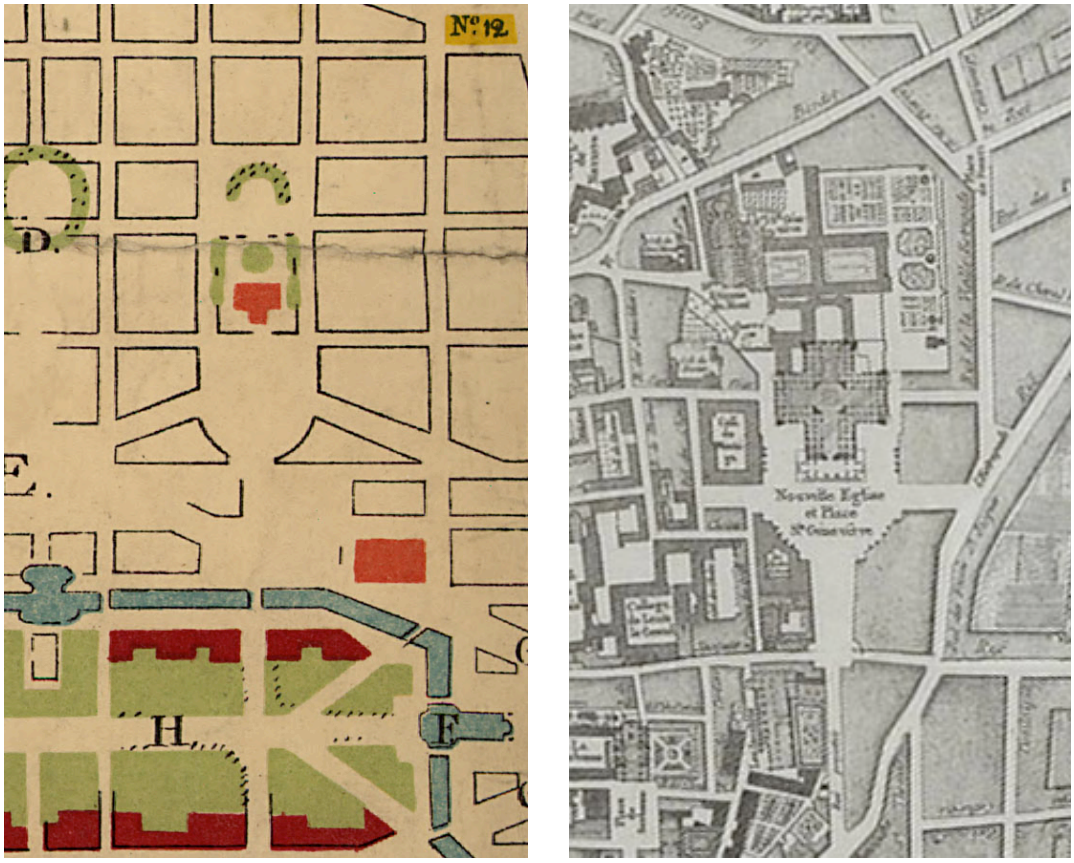


Fig. 5.17

Comparison to Pantheon, Rue Soufflot (detail Figs. 0.4 & 0.8)

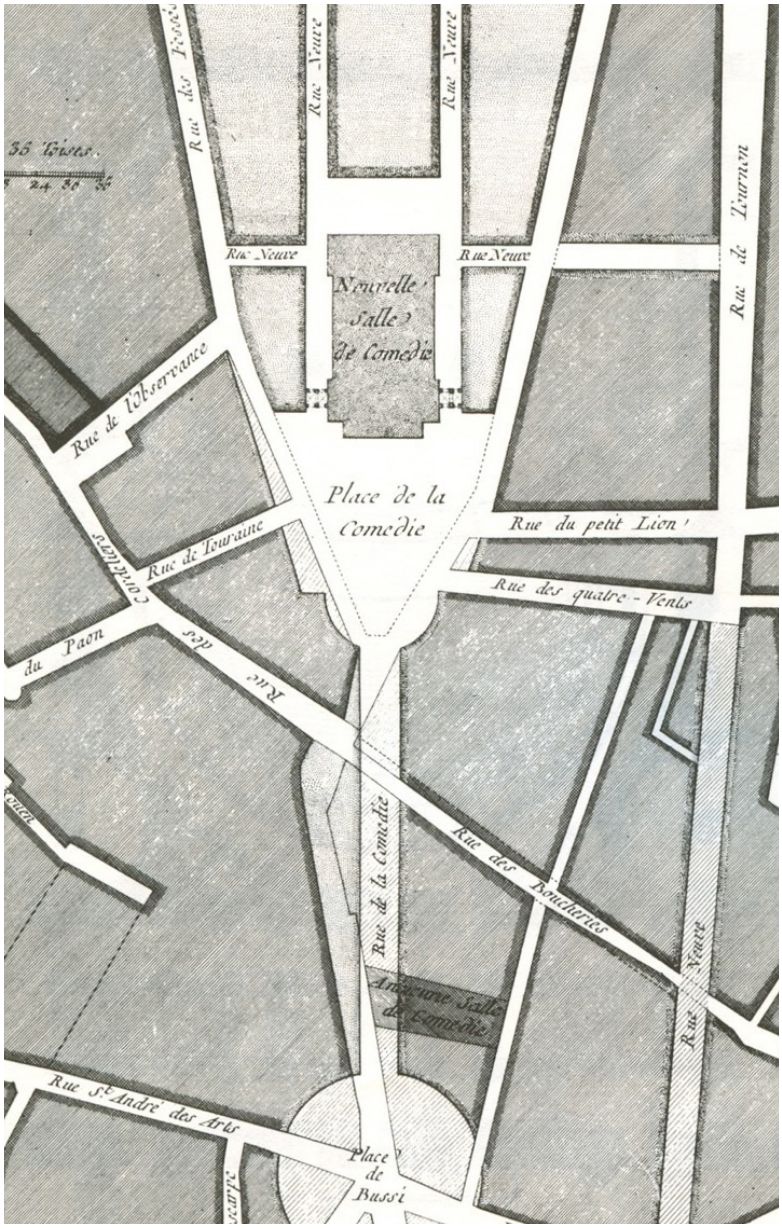


Fig. 5.18

Plan générale de la situation de la nouvelle salle de comédie françoise. Suite du recueil de planches sur les sceinces, les arts libéraux et les arts méchaniques, avec leur explication

Paris, 1777
Encyclopédie de Diderot et d'Alembert.

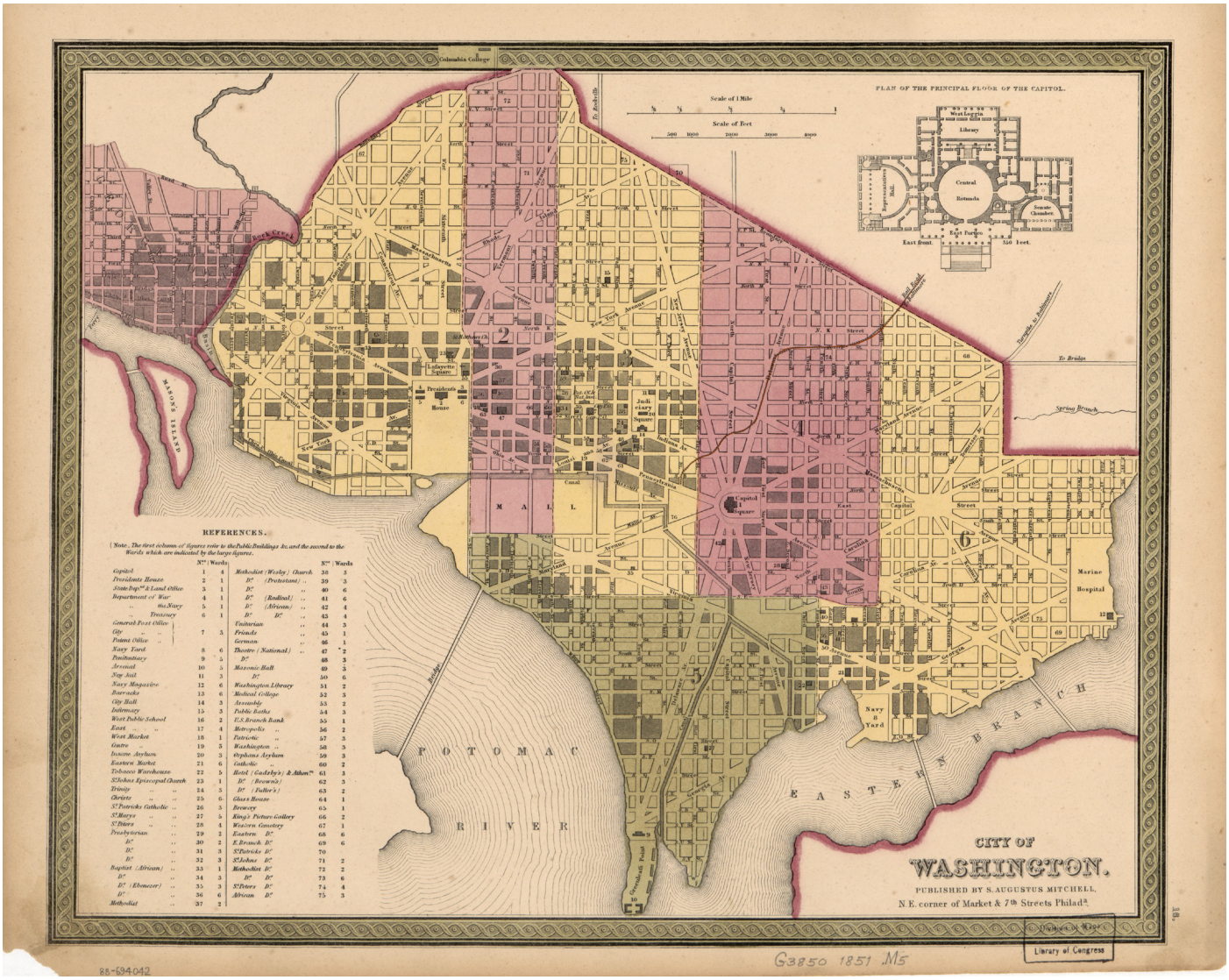


Fig. 5.19

City of Washington.

Mitchell, S. Augustus, and Cowperthwait & Co Thomas.
Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell, 1851
Map.
https://www.loc.gov/item/88694042/.

Rue Soufflot.'[99] The contemporary relationship between the portico of the Pantheon and the Jardins de Luxembourg is similarly grand however, this would not have been so apparent in the later eighteenth century. This part of the plan correlates more directly to the sequence of spaces initiated by the church of the Madeleine. The distance between the Madeleine and the centre of the Place Louis XV translates to that between the proposed site for the L'Enfant Pantheon and the centerline of the Grand Avenue (Fig.5.16). Work to the Madeleine had only just begun when L'Enfant left France and it remained incomplete through the Revolutionary period, but its footprint was included in the 1775 Jaillot, as well as the 1790 Verniquet maps of Paris. It is likely that one of these plans, if not both would have been in Jefferson's possession, and it is equally feasible that they may have been made available to L'Enfant for reference. The detail of the configuration between these spaces is described only faintly within the L'Enfant plan, but the principal orientation of such critical spaces and their dimensional similarities to the Parisian precedent, points to an imagination that owes a strong debt to the pattern of growth progressing in eighteenth-century Paris and the incisions to the existing fabric enacted to reinforce an evolving ceremonial order. Furthermore, it reinforces the strong reliance on arrangements of public space that clustered around the Champs Elysées and the Tuileries, suggesting a parallel understanding of the modulation between civic and ceremonial realms within the city.

Moving further east along the plan, these parallels become less clear as the plan becomes less distinct, and the annotation less specific. The axis along 6th St. is topped by an unnamed structure fronted by one of L'Enfant's largest squares. This is of the scale of the Place Louis-le-Grand and larger than the setting of any civic institution of its kind in Paris at the time. In form, the dipping apse of the opening suggests that of the Place Panthéon above others within the Jaillot plan, but it is unclear as to which of the remaining anchor buildings L'Enfant intended to locate here (Fig.5.17). Amongst the 'several squares or area such as are intended for the Judiciary Court - the national bank - the grand church - the play house - market and exchange ...,'[100] Peets opts for the first but provides no further detail or justification.[101] It is just as likely that this prominent position may have been reserved for a the rooms of assembly or academies that

[99] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 33.
[100] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 39.
[101] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 36.

L'Enfant describes as flanking the 'place of general resort' along the Grand Avenue in his June 22 report to the President.[102] Although several of the ambiguities of the plan can be resolved through an understanding of the historic uses of several locations such as the position of markets in the nineteenth century, the association of the site with any one of L'Enfant's intentions remains vague. The plan for the Odéon in Paris establishes a similarly prominent *place* close to the Palais du Luxembourg (Fig.5.18), however the only theatre noted in the 1850 Mitchell plan (Fig.5.19) was a small structure located on a triangular site formed by Louisiana Ave, close to this 4th/5th St axis. What became the National Theatre was not founded until 1835 on a site close to the White House but just east of the 12th St corridor. Likewise, the first University to occupy the plan was the George Washington University, established in 1821 at Meridian Hill, due north of the White House but beyond the boundary to the 1791 plan.

The scale of the setting on this 4th/5th St corridor suggests something of the magnitude of the Judicial wing of government but while the *Ancien Regime* saw several renovations of the court system, and Boullée projected a monumental manifestation of the Palais de Justice, there was little available built precedent for an independent structure for the court that L'Enfant could follow. Furthermore, L'Enfant gives little weight to this branch of government in either the plan or in his accompanying reports to George Washington – and despite the Supreme Court building aping the portico of the church of the Madeleine, it was not completed until 1935 when it became the first independent location for the Judiciary in the city.

The fourth possible role for such a grand location is the 'assembly rooms' referred to in the report of 22 June,[103] and although this may appear a relatively humble programmatic designation, the establishment of a City Hall on a much diminished portion of the site as early as 1822 suggests that L'Enfant may have produced a condensed version of the symbolic order of the larger city plan at this critical node to suggest the reflexive relationship between the structure and authority of the federal government and that of the city. Here the structure of city 'Assembly' is positioned atop its own Places des Armes, aligned on the east/west axis with the House of the President, with a direct

[102] L'Enfant, "L'Enfant's Reports to President Washington, Bearing Dates of March 26, June 22, and August 19, 1791," 36.
[103] L'Enfant, 36.

‘reciprocity of sight’ from the centre of the *place* to the proposed location ‘A’- the equestrian statue of the President.

Thus, L’Enfant completes a critical distribution of symbolic, ceremonial and commemorative space. These five axes: the first from the House of the President through the ‘palace’ gardens, the Champs and tailing off towards the watery vanishing point of the Potomac River; the second anchoring the ceremonial heart of the plan at 12th St; the third, centered between the white house and capitol, establishing a line of heroic commemoration from Pantheon to Naval Column; the fourth providing an echo of the larger order through the convergence of avenues on the forecourt of city government; and the fifth axis passing through the seat of Congress, each articulating an different manifestation of government and authority. This is L’Enfant’s presentation of the setting for national life operating at the highest register, an order that is then interwoven with a secondary arrangement of civic, state and commercial spaces.

The Lived City

L’Enfant’s objective for the distribution of avenues and squares was to establish pockets of simultaneous growth. This practical concern for the even and prompt development of the district was to be assisted by the introduction of the State squares identified in the previous chapter. The squares would have acted as their own centres for distinct communities and areas of concentrated investment. The approach was to produce a ‘chain of Improvement’[104] woven into the larger order of the primary institutions of the city. This in turn suggests a secondary order to the layout of the plan and gives purpose and direction to the network of avenues that bypass the major institutions and ceremonial axes as well as providing a rationale for the modulation of L’Enfant’s grid. As shown in Fig.4.21 the primary ceremonial order of bifurcation and mirroring, set out by the White House and Capitol and orientated to critical vanishing points in the wider landscape, bypass most of these squares. Rather these are set in the heart of the territories marked by the main arteries and woven together through the secondary system of avenues, the few spaces remaining outside of this network, connected through tertiary diagonals. It is apparent that this web of subsidiary public spaces is aligned to enforce a sequence of commercial routes that traverse the plan. These correspond to

[104] L’Enfant, 44.

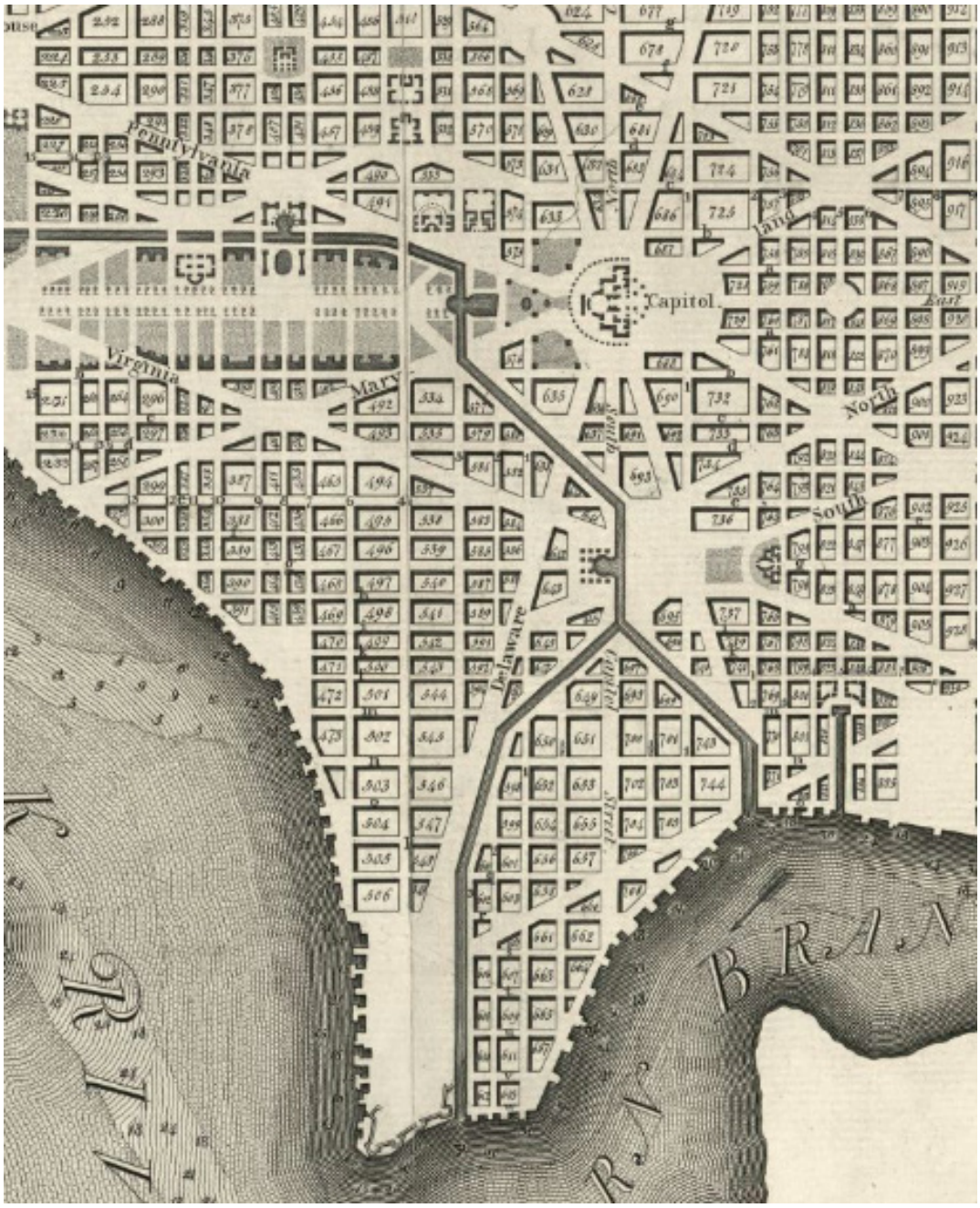


Fig. 5.20

Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia

Ellicott, Andrew, 1754-1820.,Norris Peters Co., Thackara & Vallance
Ellicott, Andrew, Norris Peters Co, and Thackara & Vallance. Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia: ceded by the states of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the seat of their government, after the year MDCCC. [Washington?: s.n., 189-?, 1792] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/88694170/.

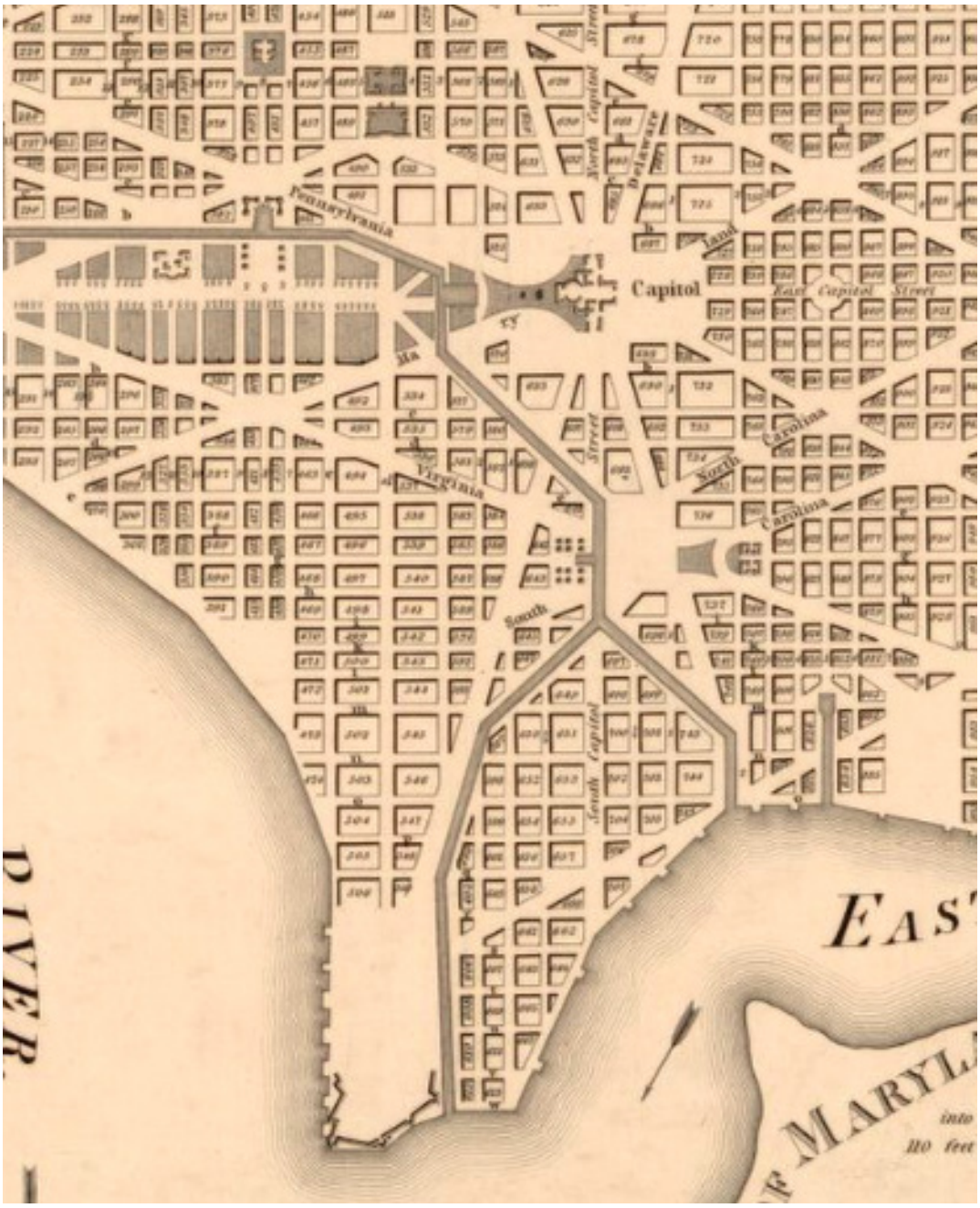


Fig. 5.21
Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia

Ellicott, Andrew, 1754-1820. Hill, Samuel, 1766?-1804., De Krafft, F. C
Ellicott, Andrew, Samuel Hill, and F. C De Krafft. Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia: ceded by the states of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the seat of their government, after the year MDCCC. [Boston: s.n, 1792] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/88694166

significant bridge crossings at Tiber (now Rock) Creek and the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River) and connect such trade routes to the State squares, the proposed docks and the spaces presumed to house the city's markets. Here the complex diagonal road system is revealed not as a simple connection between nodes located on an urban grid as suggested by Partridge,[105] but as a commercial urban armature superimposed upon the ceremonial order of the political centre.

L'Enfant's annotation does not specify the location of commercial centres, other than the mile-long arcade 'M' along E. Capitol St, but Elbert Peets' speculation as to distribution of a 'very commodious series of market places'[106] along L'Enfant's canal provides a convincing vision of the civic life of the city. His identification of a market at the intersection of the central north-south Axis at 8th St is further supported by the eventual development of the Central Market on this site – established by ordinance in 1802[107] and eventually demolished in response to the formalization of the space by the McMillan Plan in the early twentieth century. The detail supplied by the Andrew Ellicott engraving of 1792 of the original plan, while rejected by L'Enfant, suggests a more detailed configuration of this site. The two versions of this engraving, Samuel Hill's (Fig.5.20) and the Thackara & Vallance (Fig.5.21), depict slight variations, with the former showing a series of small separate structures extending into what is now the Mall, to the south of the Canal and a two L-shaped blocks encasing a generous basin with a delicate articulated edge - the latter describing two unified volumes south of the canal flanking a disconnected pool.

These suggest two contradictory interpretations of the overlap between the commercial life of the city with the symbolic order of the plan. A closer examination of the original supports the Thackara & Vallance reading by which the active life intimated by the supposed docking points of the irregular perimeter of the basin to the north of the canal, finds what may be interpreted as either an ornamental counterpoint to the south, disconnected from the canal and forming a part of the garden sequence of the Grand Avenue, or as an extension to the main canal basin separated by a bridge akin to those traversing the canal along its length. The original plan is too indistinct to indicate a use of the space south of the canal, and the Ellicott interpretations illustrated in the two

[105] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."
[106] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 27.
[107] Morgan, "Maj. Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the Unhonored and Unrewarded Engineer."

engravings, describe a curious hybrid, the north half of the Grand Avenue is left open, and the south resumes the pattern of gardens that characterise the central axis from the Capitol. Equally the precedents that reveal much of the potential character of the Avenue provide little clarity - as the field of the Champs Elysées, the sequence of gardens of the adjacent Hôtels, and the structure and location of the *places royals*, are not typically understood as being interwoven with the commercial function of eighteenth-century Paris. However, the distribution of avenues and the framework of communication between riverside docks, river crossings and the canal provide a simple logic.

Mapping the connections between the key axes and avenues of the plan that coincide with the L'Enfant's state squares reveals two intersecting systems. The first relates to the arteries for land transport established by the line of Massachusetts Ave which then dips slightly south as it joins Kentucky Ave at what is now Lincoln Park to meet Pennsylvania Ave and cross the Eastern Branch (Fig 5.22). Here the trade route from the established settlement at Georgetown to the south is reinforced across the plan for the city. Further routes into the district, string together the state squares to the north and west and intersect the main artery at critical junctions (squares 9, 2 and 5), suggesting an orchestrated commercial network tied to the ceremonial heart of the plan. The secondary system then appears to be laid out to connect river and canal trade to this road network (see Fig.4.19). This is anchored by the central orthogonal cross-axis of E.8th and K Streets at square '2' where it intersects with Massachusetts Avenue, further connections being established at N/S Capitol St. Not only does this integrate the established primary lines of the grid order with the long-shot vistas of the secondary avenues but it interweaves a vertical orientation keyed to the water (as initiated by the long view from the White House to Piscataway Park discussed in Chapter 3) with the diagonal framework of *chasses* cut through the land and punctuated with the monumental order of national, federal and civic institutions, memorials and fountains.

The vertical order connecting the river trade with the canal and northwards to the east-west arc of the main trade thoroughfare suggests that the axis of 8th St would belong to the corporate metabolism of the city, which would then cut across the ceremonial order of the Grand Avenue. This dual function of the plan recollects the dual emphasis of L'Enfant's early enthusiasm for the Potomac site expressed in his correspondence regarding the early surveys of the territory. As discussed in Chapter 3, his initial survey

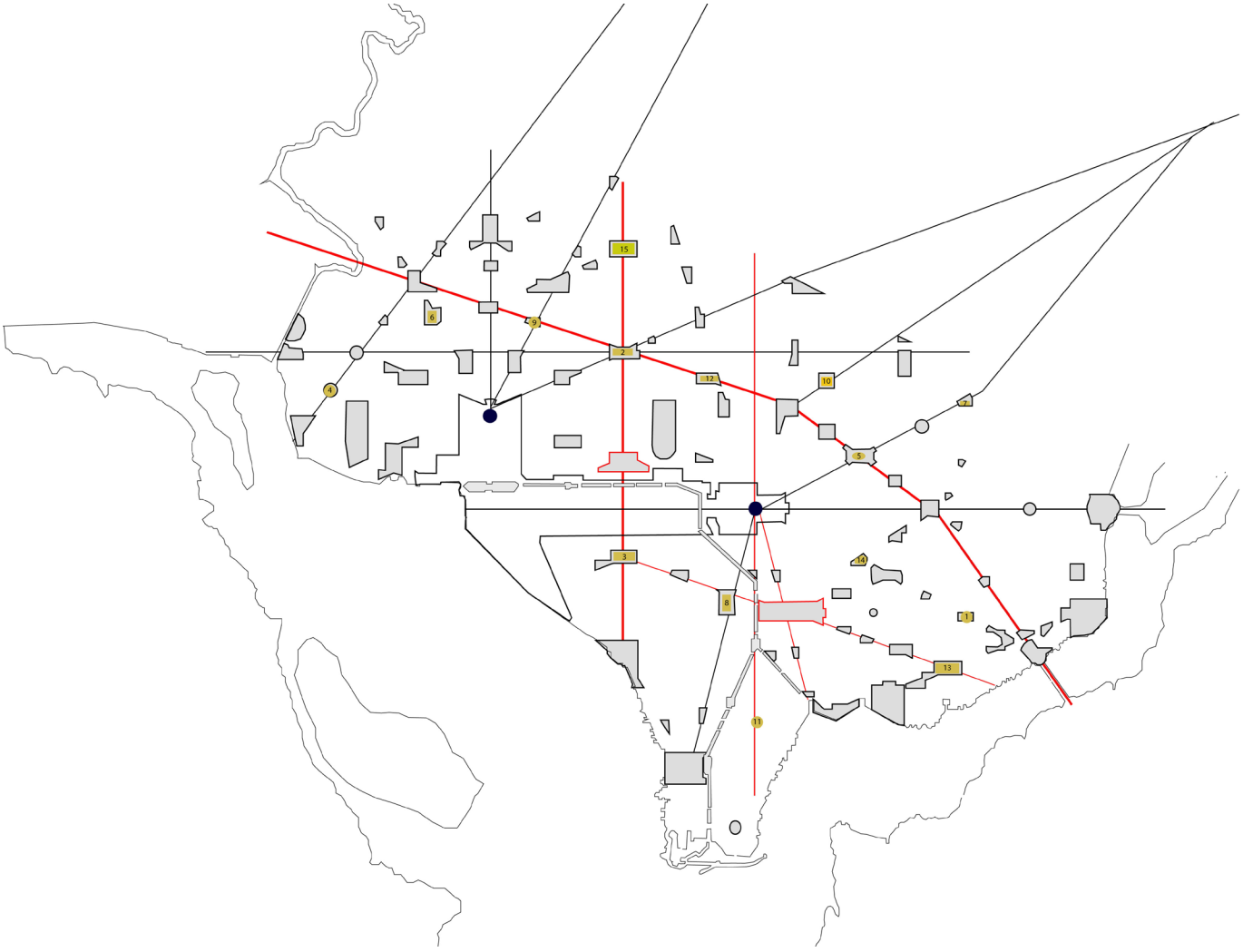


Fig. 5.22

The Market network of the L'Enfant plan
market spaces and connecting avenues are shown in red interwoven with the folmal spaces of the city

(Author)

plan varies from the engraving and where many subsequent changes have been made. There are the unhappy " circles " and " squares " formed by the fortuitous confluence of streets and avenues. These are a stiff challenge to the ingenuity that seeks to bring form out of their formlessness ; I suspect that L'Enfant gave many of them up in despair. And there are three or four smaller plazas that would have added pleasant touches of incident to the city plan.

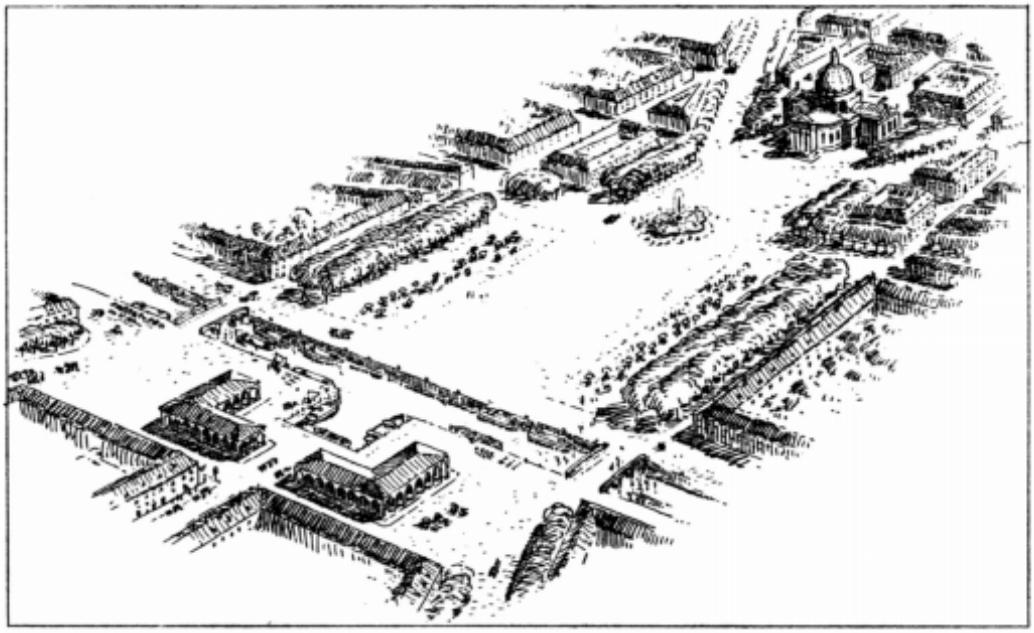


Fig. 6. Washington. The Civic Centre.

There was a charm, surely, about L'Enfant's city, a charm that Washington has had to give up in paying the cost of size and engineering efficiency. His city was quieter than ours, its tempo was slower, in colour and form it was better controlled. The private buildings were low and the monumental buildings stood out in better contrast. Thus its rhythms were more pronounced and its architectural organization was more legible.

Fig. 5.23

Washington the Civic Centre

Elbert Peets 1933
L'Enfant's Washington The Town Planning Review Vol. 15, No. 3 (May, 1933), pp. 155-164 (11 pages)

of the south of the site, along the Eastern Branch, suggested a plan for a city that might be understood as a contained, comprehensible whole when viewed from the ridge above Tiber Creek. The contrary vision that developed through his survey of the area to the north, positioned the critical nodes of the plan in relation to a much broader vista - the White House and Capitol orientated toward the distant horizon. When bringing such considerations to bear on the current plan analysis and the two orders that emerge from it, it is possible to understand the city as the amalgamation of the two visions; the ceremonial heart of the national government determined by a diagonal network of primary avenues interwoven with a more traditionally ordered lived city occupying the southern and eastern portion of the district – relatively self-contained and legible in its order.

Such a reading is supported by Peets' speculative examination of L'Enfant's ambitions.[108] He suggests that the southern half of the city was intended as a business district set apart from the national government,[109] initiated by the basin at W.5th St for heavy commerce, punctuated by a vast civic centre similar in scale to the Capitol grounds at what became Garfield Park (Fig.5.23), and joining the federal core at the W.8th St basin, aligned due south of the proposed Pantheon. Such a distinction and the designation of such a setting for the commercial life of the city are not clearly evidenced in L'Enfant's correspondence or the annotation of the original plan, but Peets' elaboration of the detail of these spaces are 'meant only as points of departure for your imagination.'[110]

Nevertheless, the commercial order of markets, canal and river transport and the road network that was to traverse the city, go some way to explaining the eccentricities of L'Enfant's undulating grid system. Previous analysis of the plan's underlying orthogonal order established by William T Partridge in 1930 as part of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission Report[111] proposed that a standard rectangular system determined not only the street distribution, but also the orientation of avenues. His argument is extensive but based upon contemporaneous uses areas of the city and appears to disregard the primary north-south system of significant axes, which

[108] Peets, "L'Enfant's Washington."
[109] Peets, *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, 28.
[110] Peets, 27.
[111] Partridge, "Studies in Continuity of Planning."

are much less regular in the 1791 plan than Partridge suggests.[112] The clustering of smaller blocks, discussed in the previous chapter, indicate that the state squares were intended to reinforce viable neighbourhoods, punctuated by clearings along main commercial routes such as Massachusetts Avenue. The few points of deviation from this system of expanded and contracted blocks then take on additional resonance. This occurs in two critical places, the vertical axes of 12th and 8th streets where the main street is flanked by small blocks along its length, the points at which the domestic, commercial and every day, intersect with the celebration of nationhood and leadership (Fig.4.19).

The commercial logic of the distribution of secondary centres is reconciled with the symbolic order of political authority and this relationship is reinforced through a system of duplication and specific points of programmatic collision. As shown in Fig.5.23, not only is Peets' civic centre an echo of the scale of the Capitol grounds, but the *place royal* along the Grand Avenue at 12th St is reflected in the foreground to the space of the supposed City Hall to the north-east. Here the plan acts as a reflection of the complex simultaneity of local and national government, each with their comparable set of theatrical settings. This mirroring of the civic and the ceremonial across the city reinforces the influence of L'Enfant's experience as both a landscape painter and as a choreographer of political celebration.

As previously noted, both these aspects of L'Enfant's pedigree are critical to a reading of the formal order of the city, and within the larger context of eighteenth-century urban and garden configurations, such a means of orchestrating public life was rooted in the both the use of perspective, and its origins in theatrical representation. Beyond the use of the long view to reinforce the central authority of the King/President and appropriate the distant landscape, the control of the spaces that structure such a perspective has its origins in the illusionary stage sets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[113] Over this period the formal theatrical presentation of authority developed to express the distance between ruler and ruled, or ruler and God, revealing divine truth through artifice. As part of the enlightenment shift in the conception of the divine, theatre

[112] Partridge, 29.
[113] Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*; Ravel and Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791*; Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea."

became a device for the representation of a more reflexive relationship between scene and observer.[114] This was a shift that also reflected a change in the expectations of the state (res publica), whose authority within the republican paradigm, rested with the people (populus), rather than with God.[115]

Expressed architecturally, sovereign authority was then not simply situated at the end of an expansive view, but at the centre of an elaborate network of vistas that reciprocally placed this authority in a position of perpetual public scrutiny. This is a relationship consolidated by French architects like Ledoux in his plan for the Saline de Chaux, where the saltworks are 'placed at the center of the radii, nothing can escape surveillance; it keeps a hundred eyes open as a hundred others sleep, and their burning pupils light up the unquiet night without respite.'[116] It is a vision of order that is distilled in his image of the 'all seeing eye' of the theatre of Bensançon. Here, the audience is superimposed on the eye of the actor as a reflection, light emanating from both the space the theatre and the disembodied gaze (Fig.5.26). This image, the design for the Theatre, and the Saline de Chaux were all produced approximately ten years before work started on the plan for Washington, D.C. For L'Enfant, the interrelation of both monumental and civic spaces across his matrix of avenues suggests a similar set of relationships. Here the principle of public scrutiny and civic life, positioned across the wider system of vistas, is superimposed with the binary relationship between the President's house and the Capitol building and the long views associated with each, which initiate the first geometry of the city. For Ledoux and for L'Enfant, the reciprocal perspectival relationship is no longer that of a singular point viewing another at a great distance, but the gaze of a distributed, audience, populous or lived city.

The distributed view described here is most apparent at the points in L'Enfant plan where critical axes, or connecting avenues bisect or travel through alternative categories of activity. This occurs in two moments. First the central artery of 8th Street, which forms a centreline for the city, cuts through three prominent state squares, the Pantheon and central market, continuing south to culminate in L'Enfant's Naval Itinerary column

[114] Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls. Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment*; Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime*; Pérez Gómez and Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*.
[115] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*.
[116] Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment*, 40. See also: Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime*.

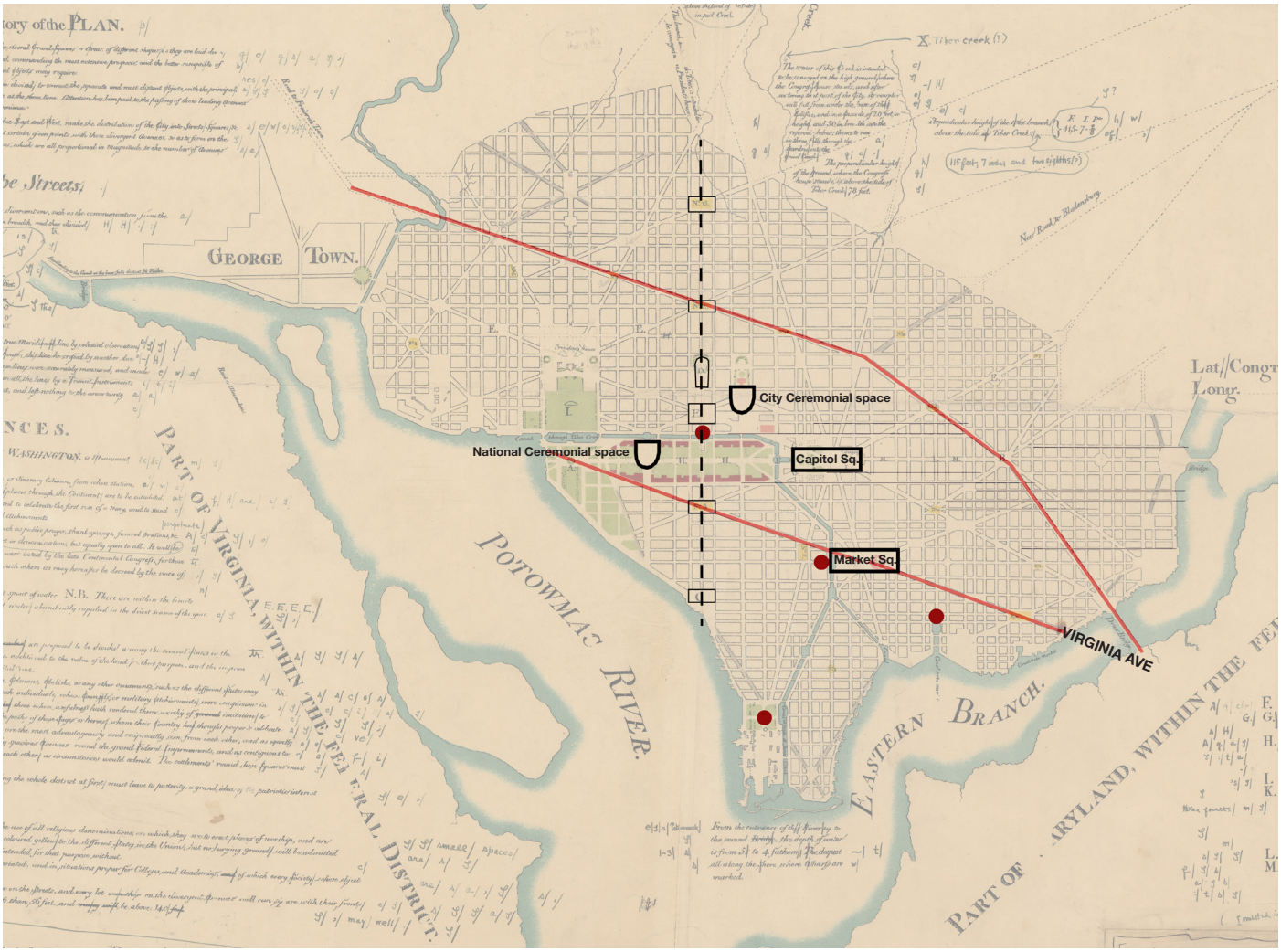


Fig. 5.24

Duplication of federal and civic spaces in the L'Enfant plan
Red dots indicate markets and docks

where it meets the Potomac River (Fig.5.24). The second is found to the south of the city in the commercial heart of the plan. Virginia Avenue - pinned at one end by the Equestrian Statue 'A' at the end of the Grand Avenue, passes through state square '3' where it intersects with 8th St, crossing the canal to form a critical connection with Peets' civic square and market space, and ending in the docks along the Eastern Branch (Fig.5.24). This modulation between sacred and profane stitch the component orders of the city together, creating a theatricality of setting by which the spatial structure of political ideology becomes the background to the everyday, and the everyday provides the mediating framework for participation in ceremonial civic ritual.

The path of the long-since vanished canal exemplifies such an articulation of the urban order. As already noted, this waterway marks moments of high drama along its length, emerging from the banks of the Eastern Branch and the docks that were to line it, the canal is transformed first into a commercial heart where it meets Virginia Avenue, before reverting to an ornamental basin at the base of the Capitol Grounds where it is fed by L'Enfant's grand cascade. It repeats such a pattern along its east-west trajectory, coinciding with the 8th St axis to form the market heart of the city before resuming its ceremonial function at the northern edge of the *Place Royal* at 5th St, and finally forming a wide pool at the southern edge of the gardens of the Presidential palace (Fig.4.14). Here the active and the celebratory lives of the city are manifest with exuberance familiar to contemporaneous depictions, with such a watery thoroughfare structuring the organisation of Marly-le-Roi (Fig 2.8) and becoming a vibrant foreground to the plans for the great institutions and industrial buildings that dominated the Prix de Rome (Fig. 5.25). Such moments that traverse the city provide a vital subsidiary order to the more formal aspects of the plan, but they also bring the plan into line with L'Enfant's French contemporaries such as Ledoux and Boullée for whom, according to Wiebenson, 'the ideal city scale would have been as varied, diverse, and full of surprises and theatrical effects.'[117]

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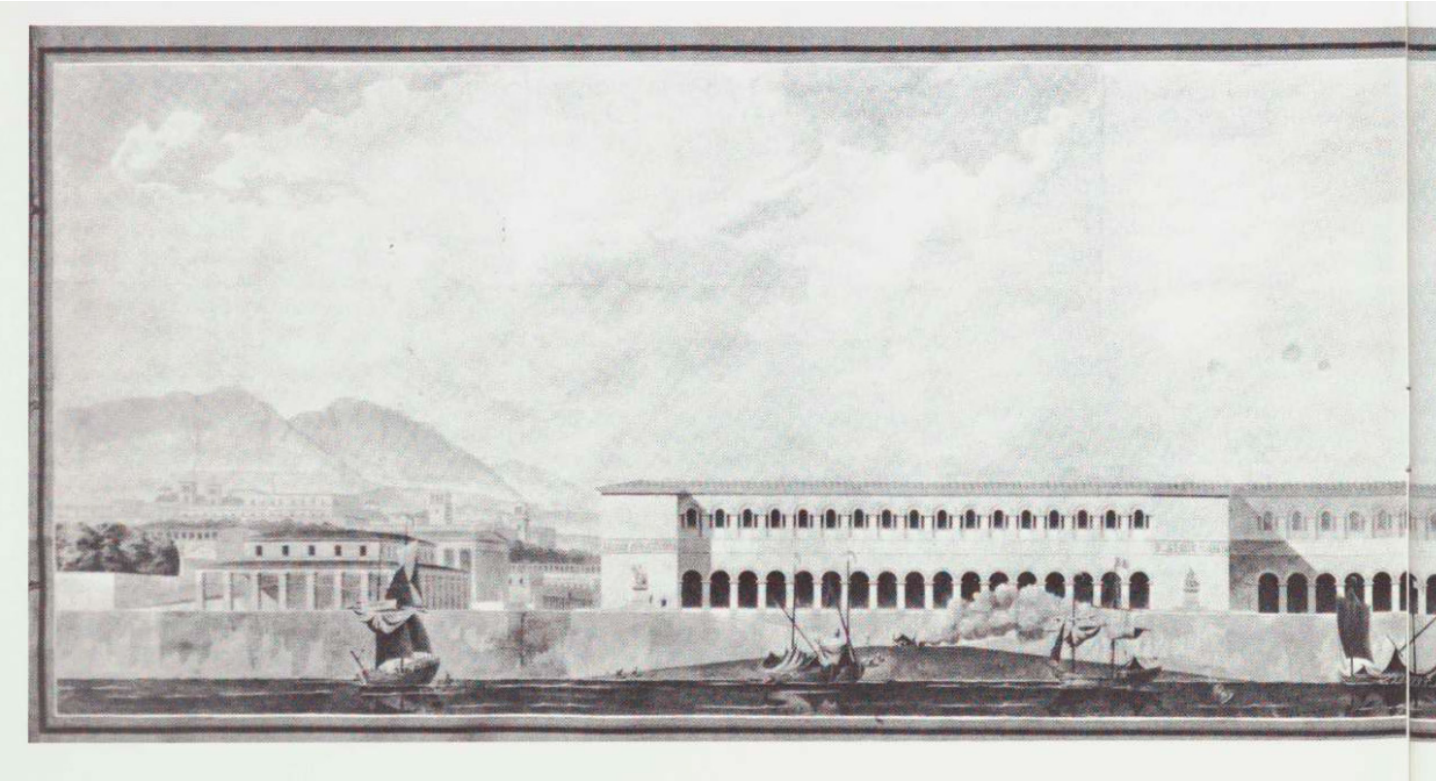
While the sophistication and depth of more established and celebrated architects extends much further than L'Enfant's, if we are to understand the breadth of his vision, we need

[117] Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France*, 115.

to assume that he was functioning within a related intellectual climate, however remotely. To this extent, the concurrence of L'Enfant's work with his contemporaries in France provides a valuable comparative synopsis of the stage that architectural thinking had reached by the latter part of the eighteenth century on the two continents, and the extent to which it reflected the political climate of the time, architecturally and allegorically. Certainly, Ledoux conducted a more prolific exploration of the complex and contentious reassessment of the role of the state and the freedom of society at the end of the eighteenth century than L'Enfant, but L'Enfant's mandate to bring together the order of authority with the practicalities of a lived settlement offer a similarly rich source of understanding of Late Enlightenment urban planning. For in the case of the new Federal City the ritual order of the celebration of the State, and the President, is made to form the framework for both an urban every day and a means to articulate a relationship to a boundless wild frontier located at the city's furthest vanishing points. And while it is important not to exaggerate L'Enfant's sophistication as an architect, his plan for the Federal City remains a paradigmatic example of the collision of a spatial representation political ideology with both immediate necessity and an aspiration towards the conquering of a boundless hinterland.

The plan analysis provided here revives the relationship of L'Enfant's work to specific European precedent, but more importantly, it is the first to relate the complex order of the projected city to the rich representational order to which it belonged. The 1791 plan has been treated as an odd anomaly and a function of American pragmatism and haste without a close regard for the extraordinary complexity of its layered organisation. The relative absence of contemporary debate, discussion or correspondence has tended to diminish the significance of the plan relative to later developments in Washington, D.C. or examples of other American cities. However, the drawing itself speaks volumes and when placed in relation to better understood, European examples of civic and ceremonial space, the plan articulates a highly unusual representation of a particular moment in American political thought.



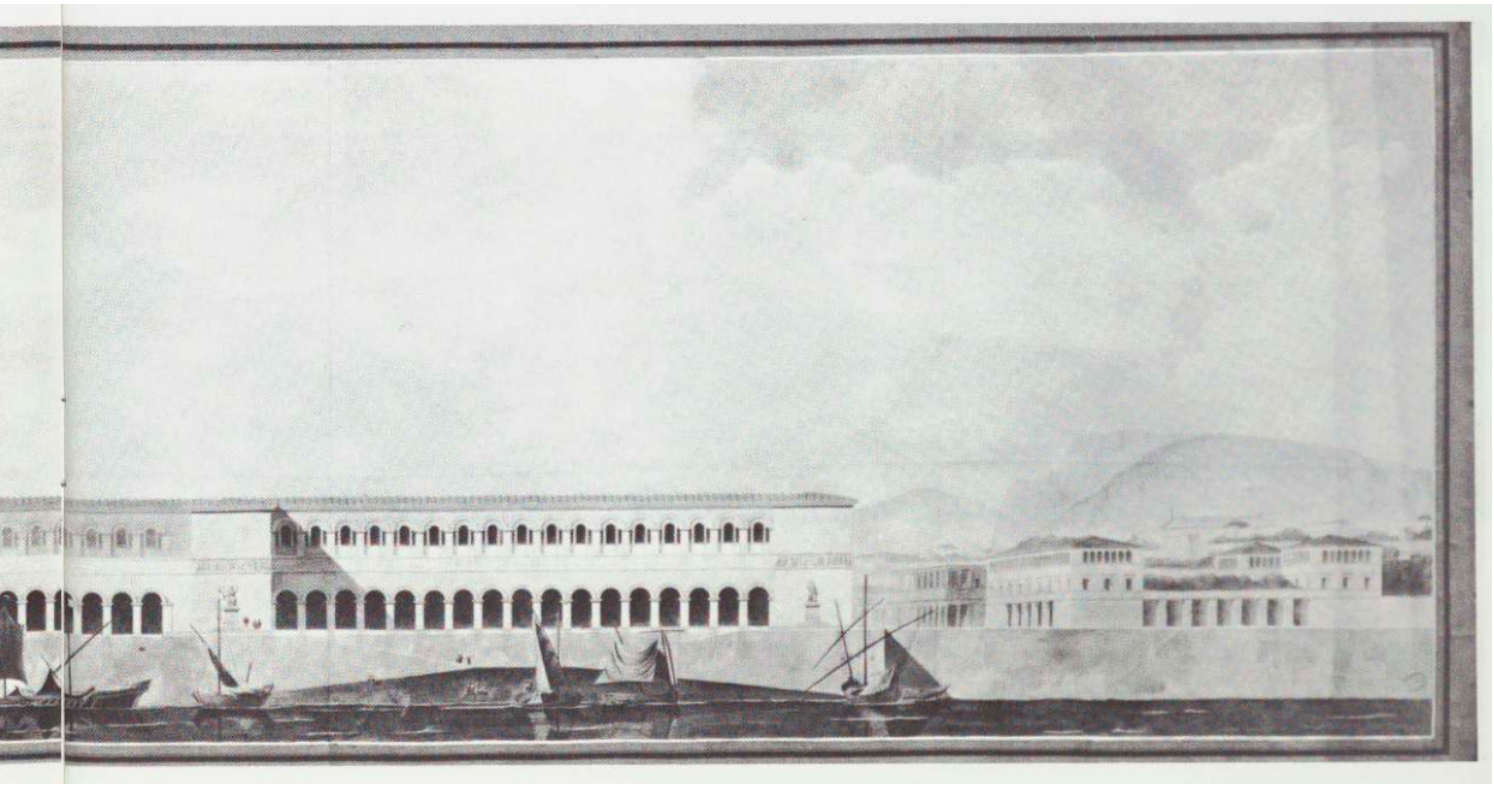


Fig. 5.25

Greniers Public 1er Grand Prix. Elevation

Louis-Ambrose Dubut ~1797
Ecôle des Beaux Arts

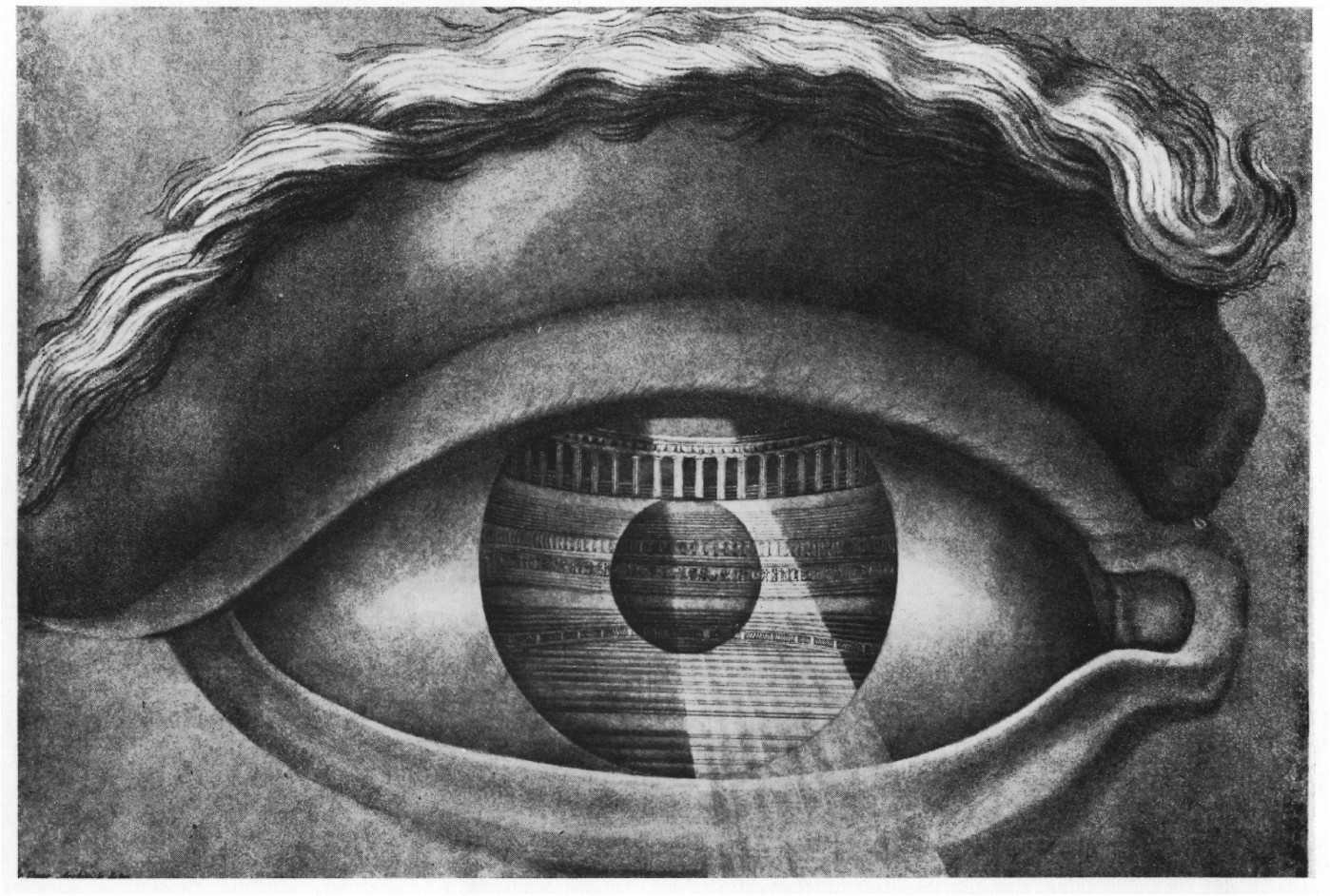


Fig. 5.26

The interior of the Theatre at Besancon reflected in the pupil of an eye

Claude Nicolas Ledoux, ~1784
Musée Ledoux, Saline Royale, Arc et Senant

Conclusion

In 1865 Charles Dickens arrived in Washington, D.C. and noted the following:

> Take the worst parts of the City Road and Pentonville, or the straggling outskirts of Paris, where the houses are smallest, preserving all their oddities, but especially the small shops and dwellings occupied in Pentonville (but not in Washington) by furniture brokers, keepers of poor eating-houses, and fanciers of birds. Burn the whole down; build it up again in wood and plaster; widen it a little; … plough up all the roads; plant a great deal of course turf in every place where it ought *not* to be; erect three handsome buildings in stone and marble anywhere, but the more entirely out of everybody's way the better; … and that's Washington.[1]

His comments, although sensational, were a fair reflection of the new capital at the time. The city's growth had stuttered. L'Enfant's dispersed neighbourhoods - intended to grow quickly and simultaneously - remained sparsely populated well into the twentieth century. The new capital had limited commercial activity and a harsh climate, making it of little interest to those outside of the federal institutions. As development slowed, the principles and complexity of L'Enfant's plan were quickly eroded, and his careful modulation of public space and the layering of ceremonial and civic programmes became diluted to the point of invisibility. Had the original ideas been realised, the capital city may well have represented a remarkable transferal of eighteenth-century European urbanism into a post-revolutionary open landscape. Instead, it was the openness that prevailed. The grand avenues and monumental vistas eventually became urban, but they are a pale reflection of the city evident in the 1791 plan.

[1] Dickens et al., *Works of Charles Dickens: American Notes*, 131.

Our understanding of the L'Enfant's work has been obscured by these later developments, or lack thereof. Then in 1901, after a century of erratic growth, the centre of the city was re-organised under the direction of the Senate Committee for the District of Columbia to meet an equally explicit but entirely different set of ideological criteria.[2] The McMillan Commission sought to recover and reinforce the order of the L'Enfant plan, to carry 'to a legitimate conclusion the comprehensive, intelligent, and yet simple and straightforward scheme' which was regarded as a vision 'to make a city a magnificent and consistent work of art.'[3] The impact of the McMillan plan is recognisable in the layout of many American cities that experienced significant growth around the turn-of-the-century but bears an only passing resemblance to L'Enfant's original layout. Nevertheless, as it was this period that resurrected L'Enfant (literally disinterring his remains to transfer them to Arlington cemetery), his plan became associated with its 1901 reinterpretation. According to this model, the monumentality of the radiating avenues converged on an equally monumental swathe of green, culminating in a broad view over the Potomac river-valley. Here was a plan, large enough in scale to speak for American progress - a grand city to celebrate democratic nationhood.

The new plan framed the city and its monumental core as part of a wider park-scape[4] and the consolidation of the space of the *Mall* that resulted, placed a green sward at the heart of the American ceremonial life. This is the space of inauguration, of commemoration, and of protest - colloquially referred to as 'America's front yard.' However, this suggestion of domestic familiarity and outdoor recreation misrepresents what is a grandiose and highly structured civic space. It also recontextualises the nation's capital as an exemplary form of City Beautiful planning.

This thesis provides the first extended analysis of the 1791 plan. The previous absence of this work has allowed the McMillan reconfiguration of the spatial heart of

[2] Brown, *Papers Relating to the Improvement of the City of Washington, District of Columbia.*National Capital Planning Commission, "Extending the Legacy."
[3] United States Congress, Senate, and Committee on The District of Columbia and Park Commission, "The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia," 12.
[4] Peterson, "The Nation's First Comprehensive City Plan A Political Analysis of the McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C., 1900-1902"; Peterson, "The Mall, the McMillan Plan, and the Origins of American City Planning." See also: Brown, *Papers Relating to the Improvement of the City of Washington, District of Columbia*.

Fig. 6.1

The McMillan Plan of 1901

National Capital Planning Commission, Washington, DC.
https://web.archive.org/web/20100527181647/https://www.ncpc.gov/Images/Maps/McMillanPlan,%201901.jpg

American formal civic life to rewrite the relationship between the design of the city and the political and cultural ideas that informed it. The dissection and contextualisation of the original drawings undertaken here, is the first to reveal a city that is neither ‘simple’ nor ‘straightforward’ but rather a unique interlacing of pragmatic urgency and ideological diversity.

The plan that emerged in 1791 was an unusual act of invention and perhaps even, intuitive collage. It is hard to make sense of L’Enfant’s intentions and harder still to provide definitive evidence of the origin of his ideas. A project of such a scale far exceeded his previous experience, and the description of the city found in his reports and letters is often so florid as to speak more of his character than the origin of his ideas. We are presented with an unusual individual tasked with inventing a vast urban world in a new nation with limited urban life.

The faltering development of the Federal city following L'Enfant's removal may be a damning indictment of the extent of his ambitions. Too big and too grand for many, the plan stood little chance of being realised in full, and its role within American urban development has been largely disregarded as a result. This is a significant oversight as it is precisely the scope of the city and its ability to both provide a detailed manifestation of eighteenth-century American political thought, and weave together contradictory representations of authority, that make the plan a critical reflection of the nation's founding ideologies and expansionist ambitions. This thesis restores the position of the plan within this context. By locating the choice of site for the city, the extent of the plan, and its various orientations, within eighteenth-century debates over the spatial and political organisation of the expanding union, this thesis provides an original interpretation of the plan as part of the post-revolutionary national project. Furthermore, it demonstrates the unique importance the city as a coherent reflection of eighteenth-century readings of territory, landscape and nature from the scale of the continent to the construction of perspectival experience. There are no other American examples of a strategy of such a scale that mediated between a symbolic ceremonial civic language and land speculation. Arguably it is precisely this peculiar and often precarious balance of revolutionary idealism and practical entrepreneurialism that characterised this period of American history and make the 1791 plan its ideal representation.

Decades of debates within political thought describe this balance extensively[5] and more recent work has found that often contradictory models for governance were sustained throughout this period of rapid change.[6] However, this area of eighteenth-century American discourse has few architectural or urban counterpoints despite the planning of cites and the laying out of land being a legible vehicle for the organisation of communities and the structure of their representation, locally, regionally and in this case, nationally. The L'Enfant plan and the drawn analysis provided here, presents a unique framework for the assimilation of eighteenth-century ideas of landscape and representations of political authority.

The inherent contradiction of creating a grand federal capital for a new republic was resolved through the layers of L'Enfant's plan and its varying scales of operation. The plan projected national greatness and commercial expansion through its positioning and broader configuration, while it modulated deftly between the ceremonial and the everyday at the scale of the neighbourhood. The plan provided both a visible national symbol, and a projection of how American civic life and urban experience was to be structured. It is this layering of scales that sustains such a plurality of interpretation, navigating between small and large government, local and federal interests, land survey and landscape perspective techniques. This thesis delaminates these layers for the first time to knit together the areas of political thought, theories of landscape and the iconography of kingship in a new way. Furthermore, the thesis reactivates the 1791 plan as a tool of expression of the structure of early American community, and the nature of its representation.

The nation, its first institutions and networks were created at great speed and their forms and objectives were neither consistent nor always compatible. L'Enfant's plan reflects this urgency, but it also manages to reconcile multiple parallel aims and contradictory ideas through the complexity of its organisation. The combination of a new contextual reading and the detailed drawn analysis provided by this thesis establishes this first plan for Washington, D.C. as a vivid reflection of a critical moment in American history. It reveals the plan as confluence of territorial

[5] See the discussion of the Republican Synthesis in the Introduction.
[6] Dahl, "Empire of the People : The Ideology of Democratic Empire in the Antebellum United States."

ambition, landscape tradition, and a vision of a new urban everyday. It thereby reclaims the plan for the nation's capital as a critical starting point for our understanding of the relationship between planning and political thought in American history.

The 1901 McMillan plan had a far clearer remit. The commission drew the monumental heart of the city as part of a network of parks and the wilder landscape of the Potomac Valley (fig 6.1). In this case, the urban is set in contrast to a green heart and the structured participation in the practice of nationhood. The Mall is not a diverse ground containing markets, theatres and *places royales,* but a binary space of national institutions, parades and mass demonstrations. For the wider city the federal core is divorced from the experience of residents and the morphology of their neighbourhoods. Whereas L'Enfant appears to have designed a city that was both civic and monumental, the McMillan Commission reinforced the city as a national symbol.

The taut relationship between personal liberty and shared endeavour persists in contemporary American politics. Large infrastructure projects battle with local interests, and the 1791 plan for Washington provides a unique insight into an urban means of reconciling such differences. The plan, and this thesis in particular, offer an alternative starting point for independent American urbanism that has important ramifications for looking forward towards the means to sustain material and social resilience in our contemporary cities. The L'Enfant plan is layered with contradictory emphases, and modes of experience. In this respect it blends the everyday and the pragmatic with the visible expression of national government and the symbolic significance of 'nature' and landscape. It does so by both overlaying alternative uses and replicating spaces across neighbourhoods within the city. As each immediate experience is echoed in the wider structure of the capital, the question of civic participation is played out through the inhabitation of the city and its wider orientation outward towards its hinterland. Such a reflexive balance within the plan suggests a means to erode more binary trends in urban development and is ripe for further investigation.

Secondly, the mutability of the L'Enfant plan is articulated through its orchestration of open space and orientation towards the surrounding landscape. This brings the web of civic life envisaged for the city into relation with a highly structured treatment of nature and the perspectival horizon. The complexity of this metabolism provides important lessons for a further reading of the integration of landscape into American cites that followed - the 1791 plan for Washington being largely absent from this history.

Furthermore, it offers an important and nuanced precedent for the recognition of the cultural and political resonance of the relationship between the urban and the rural. This thesis introduces Washington, D.C. as one of the earliest American examples of an interconnection between a city and its hinterland having political significance. It relates the scale of ambition for the city to the physical and legal structures that were laying out the inland territories and anticipating their governmental organisation. It thereby claims the planning of the Federal City as a political act, one that was to reflect the principles of republican expansion while representing the authoritative promise of the new nation. Building upon this work it is possible to envisage a theory of landscape that can better reconcile the urgency of climate change and wilderness preservation with the historically symbolic and metaphorical power of nature as a model for governance and social behaviour.

Finally, this thesis and its interpretation of the L'Enfant plan, identifies the city, or more generally, the urban, as the potential site for such a reconciliation. This historic plan does not response to nature and landscape as a site of a dispersed urbanism or American pastoralism as explored by critical contributors to this area of discourse such as Charles Waldheim, James Machor and William Cronon.[7] Instead it structures the city as a garden and incorporates the surrounding landscape as part of an enormous whole, captured perspectivally. These techniques are typical of their period but as we contend with new political and environmental challenges, such examples are critical to maintaining a plural, resilient and multi-scalar urbanism.

[7] Machor, *Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America*; Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*; Waldheim, *Landscape as Urbanism*.

Further research will bring the 1791 plan for Washington into this rich area of discourse and provide a vital alternative precedent within American urban theory.

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Fig. 0.1 Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 1887, facsimile, United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Fig. 0.2 Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 1791, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Fig. 0.3 Dotted line map of Washington, D.C., Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 1791, Map, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Fig. 0.4 Plan of the city intended for the permanent seat of the government of t[he] United States, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, 1887, facsimile (with colour), United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

Fig. 0.5 Plan of the city of Washington, Andrew Ellicott, Samuel Hill (engraver), 1792 (facsimile 1888), U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C.

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Fig. 0.8 Map of Paris, Jaillot, 1775, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:1775_Plan_de_Jaillot.jpg#filelinks

Fig. 1.1 Join or Die, Benjamin Franklin, 9 May 1754, The Pennsylvania gazette, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695523/

Fig. 1.2 The Proclamation Line in relation to locations for the Federal City

Fig. 1.3 Distribution of proposed sites for the Seat of Government in relation to river and land routes (Author)

Fig. 1.4 Distribution of proposed sites for the Seat of Government in relation to population distribution 1790, Overlay by Author. Population density from: Hermann Friis "A Series of Population Maps of the Colonies and the United States, 1625-1790."

Fig. 1.5 A Ferry Scene on the Susquehanna at Wright's Ferry, near Havre de Grace. Pavel Petrovich Svinin 1811-13 Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig. 1.6 Map of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferys, Sayer and Bennett, London, 1776, Rumsey Collection, http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps4598.html

Fig. 1.7 The Provinces of New York, and New Jersey; with part of Pensilvania, Thomas Jefferys, with Samuel Holland (1728-1801), Sayer and Bennett, London, 1776, Rumsey Collection. http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps4602.html

Fig. 1.8 A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland: with part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina, Joshua Fry (c1700-1754). Peter Jefferson (1708-1757), Thomas Jefferys, London, 1755, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3880.ar142700

Fig. 2.1 Scale Comparison of Cities 1790 to L'Enfant Plan (Author)

Fig. 2.2 A map of the United States east of the Mississippi River in which the land ceded by the Treaty of Paris is divided by parallels of latitude and longitude into fourteen new states, David Hartley (1728-1801), Enclosed in letter from Hartley to Lord Carmarthan of January 9, 1785, William L. Clements Library, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/w/wcl1ic/x-813/wcl000907

Fig. 5.17 Comparison to Pantheon, Rue Soufflot (detail Figs. 0.4 & 0.8)

Fig. 5.18 Plan générale de la situation de la nouvelle salle de comédie françoise. Paris, 1777, Encyclopédie de Diderot et d'Alembert.

Fig. 5.19 City of Washington; Mitchell, S. Augustus, and Cowperthwait & Co Thomas. Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell, 1851 Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/88694042/.

Fig. 5.20 Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia; Ellicott, Andrew, Norris Peters Co, and Thackara & Vallance. Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia: ceded by the states of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the seat of their government, after the year MDCCC. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/88694170/.

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Fig. 5.22 The Market network of the L'Enfant plan, (author)

Fig. 5.23 Washington the Civic Centre; Elbert Peets 1933, L'Enfant's Washington The Town Planning Review Vol. 15, No. 3 (May, 1933), pp. 155-164 (11 pages)

Fig. 5.24 Duplication of federal and civic spaces in the L'Enfant plan, (author)

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Fig. 5.26 The interior of the Theatre at Besancon reflected in the pupil of an eye; Claude Nicolas Ledoux, ~1784. Musée Ledoux, Saline Royale, Arc et Senant